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By C. ALPHONSO SMITH, Ph.D., LL.D.

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Keynote Studies in
Keynote Books of the Bible

*The James Sprunt Lectures delivered at
Union Theological Seminary in Virginia*

Keynote Studies

in

Keynote Books of the Bible

By

C. ALPHONSO SMITH, Ph. D., LL. D., L. H. D.

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*To the memory of
my father*

J. Henry Smith, D. D.,

*with a sense of indebtedness that
has grown with every passing year
this book is dedicated in affectionate
veneration :: :: :: ::*

THE JAMES SPRUNT LECTURES

IN nineteen hundred and eleven Mr. James Sprunt of Wilmington, North Carolina, gave to the Trustees of Union Theological Seminary in Virginia the sum of thirty thousand dollars, for the purpose of establishing a perpetual lectureship, which would enable the institution to secure from time to time the services of distinguished ministers and authoritative scholars, outside the regular Faculty, as special lecturers on subjects connected with various departments of Christian thought and Christian work. The lecturers are chosen by the Faculty of the Seminary and a committee of the Board of Trustees, and the lectures are published after their delivery in accordance with a contract between the lecturer and these representatives of the institution. The sixth series of lectures on this foundation is presented in this volume.

W. W. MOORE.

*President Union Theological
Seminary in Virginia.*

Preface

THESE lectures are a part of a course on the books of the Bible delivered before the Laymen's League of the Presbyterian Church in Charlottesville, Virginia. They were revised for delivery on the James Sprunt Foundation at the Union Theological Seminary of Richmond, Virginia, in March, 1917, and have been further revised for publication in book form. The initial lecture, however, on *The Keynote Method*, contains the plan and purpose to which I have tried to be constant from first to last. If in their present form these lectures or any one of them shall aid in bringing the Bible "home to men's business and bosoms," I shall be deeply grateful.

C. A. S.

*United States Naval Academy,
Annapolis, Md.*

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I

THE KEYNOTE METHOD

I

ONE of the most interesting passages in Prescott's *Conquest of Mexico* is that in which he describes the battle of Otumba. A mere handful of Spaniards confronted two hundred thousand Aztecs. Cortez thought, says Prescott, that his last hour had come. But he was to win "one of the most remarkable victories ever achieved in the New World." His method was essentially the method that we shall attempt to follow in our study of eight books of the Bible. Knowing that whatever stability or cohesiveness the Aztec armies had was due to the authority of their commanders, Cortez ordered his men not to waste their strength on the military underlings opposed to them but to seek, find, and strike down the leaders. One cacique was worth a thousand men. Had this plan not been followed it is not likely that a single Spaniard would have

survived to tell the story of the battle of Otumba.

Does not every masterpiece of literature whether of prose or verse contain some central and commanding thought that gives coherence and vitality to the whole? Is it possible to understand the parts without reference to their common contribution to a common end? Can we talk intelligently about the metre or rhythm or stanzaic structure of a poem if we ignore or make secondary the thought content to which these are but ancillary? Can we discuss understandingly the descriptive or narrative or argumentative skill of a writer, the mould of his paragraphs, the architecture of his sentences, or any other question relating to form, if we turn our eyes even for a moment from the thought goal to which he is driving? And yet a well-known critic has said that literature is that kind of writing in which the form is of more importance than the content. It would be hard to pack more vacuity into an equal number of words. The man who defined classical music as the music that is better than it sounds was a kinsman but wiser.

When Christ said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all

these things shall be added unto you," He suggested the final solution of all the vexing problems that have gathered about the relation of form and content. The Master was not attempting to appraise the relative importance of "the kingdom of God" and "all these things." He was only telling how "all these things" could be secured. How? By attending to something else first. The something else in literature is thought content; "all these things" are the details of form. The question is not, Which is the more important? but Which comes first? Priority not primacy is the solution. Put first things first.

II

We are going to read and meditate together eight masterpieces of the world's literature. They are *Genesis*, *Esther*, *Job*, *Hosea*, *John*, *Romans*, *Philippians*, and *Revelation*. We shall try to strike the keynote of each, to find its taproot, to chart its central current, to assimilate its pivotal thought, or, as Cortez might have put it, to capture its cacique. The task is difficult and I enter upon it with many misgivings. Nor am I sure that what may prove to be central in my thinking will be central in yours, or that what is central to you will be central to me.

I am heartened, however, in making the attempt by the conviction that the time is surely coming when all great literature will be studied in just this way. A few voices have already been raised in behalf of the thought content of literature. "The highest attribute of the poet," says C. F. Johnson,¹ "is thought power in the broad sense, that which coördinates multiform phenomena and refers them to law." Rudolph Eucken² expresses it still more strongly: "In our opinion this setting aside of content constitutes a danger for that very independence of art in the interests of which it is demanded. To become independent of material does not mean to attain pure independence. An art devoted preponderatingly to form easily becomes a mere matter of professional dexterity, the first concern of which is to display (to itself if not to others) its own skill. This gives rise to a predilection for the eccentric, paradoxical, and exaggerated, and, in seeking after effects of this kind, the promised freedom only too easily becomes merely another kind of dependence, a dependence of the artist upon others and upon his own moods. Genuine independ-

¹ "Elements of Literary Criticism."

² "Main Currents of Modern Thought."

ence is to be found only when the creative work proceeds solely from an inner necessity of the artist's own nature. But this cannot take place unless there is something to say, nay, something to reveal. Mere virtuosity knows no such necessity."

"So long as poetry is conceived as mere imitation," says Richard Green Moulton,¹ "the emphasis is shifted from the matter to the manner of performance; more and more the spirit of connoisseurship turns from deeper things to delicate *nuances* of effect. If poetry is creation, the subject-matter takes the center of the field." A good summary is given by C. T. Winchester:² "We have a right to ask, then, of any work of literary art, however emotional in purpose, What does it mean? What truths does it embody and enforce? We shall find there is no eminence in literature without something high or serious in its thought; and that, other things being equal, the value of all literature increases with the breadth and depth of the truth it contains."

That these views have not always been held even by eminent critics is evidenced by the following interesting extract from the

¹ "The Modern Study of Literature."

² "Some Principles of Literary Criticism."

Journal of Edward Gibbon. Under date of October 3, 1762, he writes: "I was acquainted only with two ways of criticising a beautiful passage: the one, to show, by an exact anatomy of it, the distinct beauties of it, and whence they sprung; the other, an idle exclamation, or a general encomium, which leaves nothing behind it. Longinus has shown me that there is a third. He tells me his own feelings upon reading it; and tells them with such energy that he communicates them." Is there not a fourth way and should it not come first? Let us try an illustration, beginning with Gibbon's three ways and taking as our "beautiful passage" Poe's lines:

The glory that was Greece
And the grandeur that was Rome.

(1) An "anatomy" of this passage shows that its beauty is due in part to the perfect parallelism maintained, "glory" in the first line corresponding to "grandeur" in the second, and "Greece" in the first to "Rome" in the second. The contrast, too, between the accented vowels, the long *o* and *e* sounds and the short *an* sound, contributes its quota of sonant beauty. Further analysis reveals a distinctive appeal in the com-

plete identification of glory with Greece and of grandeur with Rome. The poet had first written

The beauty of fair Greece
And the grandeur of old Rome;

but he vastly increased the effectiveness of his lines when he replaced "beauty" with "glory," and "of fair" and "of old" with "that was," thus making glory the very synonym of Greece and grandeur only another name for Rome.

(2) This has always seemed to me one of the most beautiful passages in American literature. How satisfying, how haunting, how magical is the phrasing! "Two mighty lines," says Edwin Markham, "that compress into a brief space all the rich, high magnificence of dead centuries." They are "reserved for immortality," says the English critic, J. M. Robertson. They bear "the seal of ultimate perfection," writes C. L. Moore.

(3) Whenever I read these lines, Greece in all her splendor and Rome in all her greatness seem summoned back. I feel like writing the first line in every Greek history that I may hereafter read and the second in every Roman history. They stimulate my imagina-

tion by opening vast vistas of buried history and by pointing out the best angles of vision.

(4) But these are mere bypaths of interpretation, for Poe is not thinking primarily of Greece or of Rome. He is trying to express the effect upon himself of the beauty of a friend whom he calls Helen. Till he saw Helen, the story of Greece and Rome had been only a tale that was told. The incomparable art of the one and the lofty achievement of the other, a blend of ideal beauty and of ordered power, had alike passed him by. Now it is different. A new faculty has been released. Helen has brought him home

To the glory that was Greece
And the grandeur that was Rome.

When probed for their central meaning, therefore, the lines make it clear that the goal of Poe's thought was not Greece or Rome. It was the interpretation of Helen's beauty in terms of Greece and Rome. Till this thought is made central and controlling, all "ways of criticising" will be misdirected.

One has only to glance at some of the laboriously introduced and minutely annotated editions of literature that flood the markets to-day to see that thought content

has not yet come into its own. Here is a select edition of Sidney Lanier's poems with introduction, notes, and bibliography. I turn to that great sonnet, called *The Mocking-Bird*:

Superb and sole, upon a plumèd spray
That o'er the general leafage boldly grew,
He summ'd the woods in song; or typic drew
The watch of hungry hawks, the lone dismay
Of languid doves when long their lovers stray
And all birds' passion-plays that sprinkle dew
At morn in brake or bosky avenue.
Whate'er birds did or dreamed, this bird could
say.

Then down he shot, bounced airily along
The sward, twitched in a grasshopper, made
song
Midflight, perched, prinked, and to his art
again.

Sweet Science, this large riddle read me plain:
How may the death of that dull insect be
The life of yon trim Shakespeare on the tree?

What is the theme or core of this sonnet as a whole? Plainly the thought launched in the last three lines. Lanier was thinking and wished to make us think of those myriad alchemies of nature that transcend and defy the chemistries of man. How is the insensate clod transformed through fruit and

grain and flesh into brain and thought and joy? Or, to stage it differently, how is the song of the most graceful and melodious of birds vitalized by the carcass of the most awkward and cacophonous of insects? Can science tell? "Why may not imagination," says Hamlet, "trace the noble dust of Alexander till he find it stopping a bung-hole? . . . As thus: Alexander died, Alexander was buried, Alexander returneth into dust; the dust is earth; of earth we make loam; and why of that loam, whereto he was converted, might they not stop a beer-barrel?" They might, but imagination finds little profit in tracing downward. It is the upward tracings that lead us out into the infinite. But how does our annotator make clear the central thought of *The Mocking-Bird*? He says nothing about it but he refers us to books and encyclopedias on birds in general, to English poems about the skylark and nightingale, and to thirty-two American poems and prose selections about the mocking-bird. Centrifugal criticism could hardly go further. Indeed one is surprised that in the four pages of notes no parallel reading about the grasshopper was suggested.

Let us take a still greater poem, probably

the greatest poem of equal length in all literature. I mean Gray's *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*. Longfellow tells us of the children who, coming home from school, used to look in at the open door of the blacksmith's shop

And catch the burning sparks that fly
Like chaff from a threshing floor.

They of course cared nothing for the shape that was being forged: they were interested only in the sparks. Does not Gray's *Elegy* survive to-day chiefly in sparks, in fragmentary quotations? Here again the parallel reading assigned in annotated editions is not really parallel. It is essentially unrelated. Parallel reading, if it means anything, means reading that follows the same trajectory of thought. It means reading that illuminates and is illuminated by the masterpiece with which we start. Does Milton's *Lycidas* or Shelley's *Adonais* or Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, great as they are, treat the theme treated by Gray? I think not. The fact that all are elegies is negligible. It was this confusion of title and theme, of name and substance, that led the annotator of *The Mocking-Bird* to class the poem as a study in ornithology. Of course a reading of other

great elegies will serve to bring out the contrast between them and Gray's work. But so will the reading of poems that are not elegies. Parallel reading, if it is not to be sapless and unprocreant, if it is to do more than merely satisfy a routine academic requirement, must be suggested rather than imposed, and suggested by the nature of the thought that we are trying to assimilate.

What now is Gray's central plea in his greatest poem? Notice that he did not call his lines merely an elegy but an *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*. No poet, certainly not one of Gray's fastidiousness, would have given his lines so long and detailed a title without having in mind a definite purpose. No other elegy tells in its title where it was written. But in this elegy the place was essential, for this elegy dares to pit the neglected churchyard against Westminster Abbey. It is the most democratic poem in the English language. Its plea is not for the living few who have not a fair chance but for the unnumbered dead of all times and climes who did not have a fair chance. These lines strike the keynote:

Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid
Some heart once pregnant with celestial
fire;

Hands that the rod of empire might have
 sway'd,
Or wak'd to ecstasy the living lyre.

But Knowledge to their eyes her ample page,
 Rich with the spoils of time, did ne'er
 unroll;
Chill Penury repress'd their noble rage,
 And froze the genial current of their soul.

Other elegies are individual; this is universal. Gray is championing the cause of the potentially great against the actually great. The difference, he says, is not in native worth but in relative opportunity for self-development, not in breed but in pasture. Those who lie in Westminster Abbey belonged to the privileged class. Given equal opportunity those who lie beneath the unlettered texts of Stoke Pogis or of any other neglected churchyard might have been sepulchred with equal acclaim and beneath an equal glory of bronze and marble. Instead of parallel reading, go out and stand in such a cemetery as Gray describes and think the poet's thoughts after him. It will temper your estimate of class distinctions; it will widen and deepen your sympathies; it may even dedicate you to the task of helping potential greatness to become actual

greatness. Such a poem sends a challenge to every school and church and government in the world. If parallel reading be insisted on, let it not be other elegies. Let it rather be such trumpet calls as Burns sounded in *A Man's a Man for a' That* or Jefferson in *The Declaration of Independence* or Gray himself in *The Alliance of Education and Government*.

III

That the Bible surpasses in the value and potency of its thought content all other literature does not need to be reaffirmed. I yield to no one in my admiration of the classical literatures or of the modern literatures or of the more technical literature of scientific achievement. But in vividness and intensity, in elevation of appeal, in the extent of her literary empire, and in the duration of her sovereignty, the Bible takes easy and secure precedence. The most advanced nations of the world are the children of her fireside; the centuries themselves have been but handmaidens in her service. There is no modern literature worthy the name that has not felt her influence. There is no regnant people whose strivings she has not shepherded.

But the individual books of the Bible are

not so well known as wholes as are other masterpieces of far less significance. Ask the average reader or student to give you the central content of *Hamlet*, *Evangeline*, *Pippa Passes*, *Silas Marner*, *Peer Gynt*, *Mr. Britling Sees It Through*, and, if he has read them, you will get better answers than if you ask him about the distinctive content of *Ezra*, *Isaiah*, *Joel*, *Haggai*, *Colossians*, *Jude*. The reasons for this difference seem to me many. In the first place, our sense of the unique unity and authoritativeness of the Bible as a whole has dwarfed our feeling for the distinctive content of the sixty-six book units. We forget that the men who wrote or compiled these books did so not because they had to say something but because they had something to say. We think of the Bible and read it not as a library but as a book, though in derivation and in essential content it is a collection of books rather than one book. To search the Bible for favorite verses, to listen Sunday after Sunday to the exposition of select texts, to follow the Sunday School method of long jumps and short pauses will undoubtedly store the mind with vital truth. But this is not enough, and the writers of the Bible would be the first to protest. Every method of Bible study is in

its very nature inadequate if it ignores the larger and creative or superintending purpose that gave beginning and ending and distinctive message to each book.

Even when the Bible is read through once a year or at shorter intervals, it is not read with anything like the attention to its constituent parts that we give to a like reading of Shakespeare or Emerson or Ibsen. Have you ever in reading the Bible paused after each book and asked yourself: What does this book say that no other book of the sixty-six says or says so well? If this book had not been written, how and where would the Biblical structure be weakened? If this were the only book of the Bible left to us, how much of the rest could we reconstruct? If nothing else were known about the author except that he wrote this book, how much of his personality could we gather from it?

But our familiarity or unfamiliarity with the Bible is not due chiefly to methods of reading it through. It comes to us, as has been already said, by ways far more hostile to thought content. The story is told of a Scotch minister who used to take snuff so habitually that he ignored the proprieties of both time and place. "My text this morning," he once announced, "you will find in

these words: 'Here a little and there a little,' " each little being illustrated by a corresponding pinch and inhalation. We illustrate the text differently but none the less habitually. The current method of Bible study, if it may be called such, is a hop-skip-and-jump method. No other book, except a dictionary, a cook book, or a volume of popular quotations, is used in the same way.

The popular attitude toward the book of *Jonah* will illustrate. You will not find in all literature another so flagrant example of the havoc wrought by nibbling, halting, piecemeal interpretation. If *Jonah* had not been one of the books of the Bible, its central content may very well have been differently interpreted by different readers, just as Hauptmann's *Sunken Bell* or Maeterlinck's *Blue Bird* is differently interpreted by different readers; but the interpretation would at least have been an honest attempt to appraise the message of the work as a whole. As it is, one incident has been wrested from its setting and made to connote the meaning and mission of the entire book. There are times when the book of *Jonah* seems to me the most uplifting book in the Old Testament. It is an epitome of history, world

history and individual history. It is the age-long conflict between the liberal God and illiberal man. Nowhere else in the Old Testament does God appear more godlike or human nature more human. In no other book is the writer's purpose clearer or more modernly helpful. No other book is in more exact accord with our highest imaginings of God or with our sifted and ultimate knowledge of man. But the popular interpretation stops abruptly with the appearance of the "great fish." If parallel reading were to be popularly assigned it would be a course in ichthyology. There would be nothing spiritual in it. And this attitude is due chiefly to the current discontinuity and lack of totality with which the Bible is read and interpreted. I can find no analogy outside of the Bible to this particular kind of misinterpretation.

Another influence at work is not popular but scholarly. It is the so-called higher criticism. This criticism is to-day still in the fragmentary stage. It is making bricks rather than building temples. The thrill of supposed discovery induces in the higher critic an over-valuation of the part as against the balanced appraisal of the whole. Higher criticism has achieved much and will, I hope,

achieve more. But at present it is stronger in *minutiae* than in wholes, in finding than in correlating, in the hurrah of exploitation than in the hush of interpretation. Sometimes it is a word that derails the critical judgment, sometimes an incident. Take the word "holy." It is, as you know, one of the distinctions of Isaiah that he is pre-eminently "the prophet of holiness." One does not have to be a Hebrew scholar to know what Isaiah means by "holy." Its orbit, like the orbit of other words, can be traced accurately in its use. It bears its credentials with it. Read Isaiah through from beginning to end and you will have a far better idea of what he means by "holy" than will the philologist who knows the original meaning of the word but who is wedded to the conviction that words never throw off the halo or halter of their first meanings.

The following paragraph is an illustration:¹ "When we learn that the root-word for 'holy' is the same throughout the Semitic group of languages, and that in Assyrian, for example, it is used in one form to designate a 'prostitute' or 'harlot,' we

¹J. M. Powis Smith in "A Guide to the Study of the Christian Religion" (1916), p. 140.

get a new point of view for the interpretation of the Hebrew word." I think not. The word "holy" in Hebrew, like "sacer" in Latin and "hagios" in Greek and "taboo" in Polynesian, meant originally "set apart for a definite purpose." The purpose might be good or bad. The word was ritualistic rather than ethical. But in Hebrew the ethical meaning soon dwarfed the ritualistic and in Isaiah's use "holy" plainly includes the whole circuit of moral and spiritual perfection. The knowledge of the original or etymological meaning of Hebrew "holy" does not give us "a new point of view for the interpretation of the Hebrew word." It is only another illustration of the well known principle of semantics that the first meaning of a word, while often interesting and even prophetic, will prove a barrier to interpretation if you carry it over into later meanings. The first meaning is a spring-board, not a harness.

Our word "devout" has followed the well beaten highway of Hebrew "holy." It meant originally "set apart, devoted or vowed to," and the person or thing could be vowed to Satan as well as to God. In fact Sheldon¹ speaks of those who were not the

¹"Miracles of Antichrist" (1616).

ordinary followers of Antichrist "but his special devouts." Suppose now that in an obituary of some dear friend of yours the writer had frequently used the word "devout." What would you think of the man who should whisper in your ear—"You will get a new point of view for the interpretation of this word 'devout' if you will remember that originally it could be applied to devotees of the devil"?

But the higher criticism, in its search for proof-texts, misinterprets an incident as often as a mere word. The reason is the same in both cases: the part is exalted above the whole. And the remedy is the same: read the entire book and interpret the part in the light of the whole, not the whole in the light of the part. Difficulties of interpretation, if soluble at all, will be found soluble in the waters of the central current rather than in the brackish pools along the shore. A recent critic,¹ for example, attempts to prove that in the older Old Testament books "Jahveh is the God of Palestine only, being more or less localized at Sanctuaries within its borders." His power, in other words, was not supposed to extend be-

¹ See "The Old Testament in the Light of Today," by William Frederic Badè, chapter III.

yond the limits of the Holy Land. "The fact," he adds, "that Jahveh and his worship were popularly believed to be inseparable from Palestine may be illustrated by a number of interesting passages."

The incidents cited are three. In the first, Cain is speaking: "Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the ground; and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer in the earth; and it will come to pass, that whosoever findeth me will slay me" (*Genesis* 4:14). In the second passage the Philistines are the speakers: "And see; if it [the ark of the Lord] goeth up by the way of its own border to Bethshemesh, then he hath done us this great evil: but if not, then we shall know that it is not his hand that smote us; it was a chance that happened to us" (*1 Samuel* 6:9). In the third passage David speaks to Saul: "They have driven me out this day that I should not cleave unto the inheritance of Jehovah, saying, Go, serve other gods. Now therefore, let not my blood fall to the earth away from the presence of Jehovah" (*1 Samuel* 26:19-20).

It does not seem to me that these incidents, though torn from their setting, prove or even make plausible the author's conten-

tion. They illustrate not the rightness of his view but the wrongness of his method. They but emphasize the need of standardizing our interpretation of particular incidents by weighing them in the scales of the book units as wholes. A reading of *Genesis* entire and of 1 *Samuel* entire will not only make the meaning of these incidents plain but will, in our judgment, establish the exact reverse of what the author seeks to prove. Synecdoche, or the use of a part for the whole, is a figure of speech that belongs to rhetoric, not to logic, certainly not to hermeneutics.

IV

Photographers tell us that the airplane will soon inaugurate a new kind of photography. The bird's-eye view, the view of the lower from the realm of the higher, has hitherto been the privilege of the bird alone. It will soon be man's privilege. We shall see more because we shall see less. No book offers so much to the view from the heights as does the Bible; no writers have suffered more from the partial view than the writers of the books of the Bible; and no time has called more loudly for the release of the larger view than the time in which we live.

II

GENESIS

I

NO single chapter in the Old Testament so impresses me with its inherent greatness as the first chapter of *Genesis*. Some of the *Psalms* and a few chapters in *Isaiah* strike a note of higher rhapsody. In sheer intellectuality the twentieth chapter of *Exodus* goes beyond it. But in its blend of beauty and power, in the recurrent beat of its planetary rhythms, in the consciousness of a great truth adequately embodied at last, in a certain proud disdain of all embellishment except that which attends unsolicited upon great thought greatly expressed, the first chapter of *Genesis* seems to me alone and unapproached.

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was

light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. *And the evening and the morning were the first day.*

And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. And God made the firmament and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven. *And the evening and the morning were the second day.*

And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so. And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that it was good. And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind: and God saw that it was good. *And the evening and the morning were the third day.*

And God said, Let there be lights in the

firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years: And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so. And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth, and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good. *And the evening and the morning were the fourth day.*

And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven. And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good. And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth. *And the evening and the morning were the fifth day.*

And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after

his kind: and it was so. And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind: and God saw that it was good. And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so. And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. *And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.*

This chapter abolished mythology throughout the civilized world. There were doubtless mythological germs among the Hebrews themselves but this chapter sterilized them. Latin, Greek, Norse, and Oriental mythology lived on for a while but the warrant of dispossession had been served and gods and goddesses, demigods and demigoddesses, naiads, dryads, and hamadryads, all had to go. Some of them found refuge in poetry and romance; some in the ornament and compliment of oratory; some in the metaphors and similes of rhetoric. But in exact proportion as the first great thought of the Bible had free circulation among races and nations, the big gods and the little gods were doomed. Mythology became a mere toy of the mind. The preface to the Bible had throned one God as maker and preserver of all. It served as a sort of cosmic Monroe Doctrine, announcing to the old deities that any attempt on their part to extend their system to any portion of the universe would henceforth be considered dangerous to the well-being of mankind. It had its effect. The dignity and authoritativeness of the announcement, the splendor of the vision that it unfolded, and the instant appeal made to what we now call intuitional

probability marked the inauguration of a new era in human thought.

There is in fact nothing finer in the Old Testament than the way in which the author of the first chapter of *Genesis* takes the elemental timbers of the world and cleans them of all the incrustations that had gathered upon them. Earth, water, night, sun, moon, stars,—read what Greek and Roman intellects had done with these, how buried they were beneath the sediment of bizarre fancy and grotesque history. There is not a verse of this chapter that does not by its mere omissions register an altitude of spirit immeasurably beyond all that had gone before. Matthew Arnold has drawn an elaborate distinction between the Hebrew genius or Hebraism and the Greek genius or Hellenism. “The uppermost idea with Hellenism,” he says,¹ “is to see things as they really are; the uppermost idea with Hebraism is conduct and obedience.” The distinction has enough truth to float it but it does not fit the first chapter of *Genesis*.

Read the great chapter once more and weigh its findings against this summary of classical mythology by John Fiske:² “To

¹ “Culture and Anarchy,” chapter IV.

² “Myths and Myth-Makers,” p. 18.

the ancients, the moon was not a lifeless body of stones and clods; it was the horned huntress Artemis, coursing through the upper ether, or bathing herself in the clear lake; or it was Aphrodite, protectress of lovers, born of the sea-foam in the East, near Cyprus. The clouds were not bodies of vaporized water; they were cows, with swelling udders, driven to the milking by Hermes, the summer wind; or great sheep with moist fleeces, slain by the unerring arrows of Bellerophon, the sun; or swan-maidens, flitting across the firmament; Valkyries hovering over the battle-field, to receive the souls of falling heroes; or, again, they were mighty mountains, piled one above another, in whose cavernous recesses the divining-wand of the storm-god Thor revealed hidden treasures. The yellow-haired sun Phœbus drove westerly all day in his flaming chariot; or, perhaps, as Meleager, retired for a while in disgust from the sight of men; wedded at eventide the violet light (Cēnone, Iole) which he had forsaken in the morning; sank as Hercules upon a blazing funeral-pyre, or, like Agamemnon, perished in a blood-stained bath; or, as the fish-god, Dagon, swam nightly through the subterranean waters to appear

eastward again at daybreak. Sometimes Phaëthon, his rash, inexperienced son, would take the reins and drive the solar chariot too near the earth, causing the fruits to perish, and the grass to wither, and the wells to dry up."

Is not the passion for seeing things as they really are more deeply wrought into the first chapter of *Genesis* than into the Greek conception? There is no doubt that conduct and obedience were central and controlling in Hebrew thought but they were not isolated from things as they are. They were built on them; they were supported and vitalized by them; they were a part of a natural and necessary interdependence that the Hebrew felt far more vividly than the Greek. When Boeckh, perhaps the greatest of Hellenists, came to sum up the defects of the Greek genius, he used this language: "While the Greeks saw each particular thing in its concrete shape, and in all their work strove for supreme excellence, the vision of all things in a universal interdependence was denied them." But the central achievement of the first chapter of *Genesis* is just this "vision of all things in a universal interdependence."

The poets have sometimes attributed the

passing of mythology to the revelations of science. In his *Sonnet to Science*, Poe asks:

Hast thou not dragged Diana from her car?
And driven the Hamadryad from the wood
To seek a shelter in some happier star?
Hast thou not torn the Naiad from her flood,
The Elfin from the green grass, and from me
The summer dream beneath the tamarind tree?

It was not modern science, however, that sent mythology to the discard. It was the first chapter of *Genesis*. Mythology did not live long enough to give modern science a chance to get at it. And the death of mythology, so far from injuring nature poetry, helped it. These countless myths of creation not only kept men from a knowledge of nature but made a genuine love of nature impossible. They substituted for the laws and charms of nature the capricious doings of gods and goddesses. Lanier¹ sums up admirably the real reason why mythology checked and postponed the spread of nature poetry:

Much time is run, and man hath changed his
ways,
Since Nature, in the antique fable-days,
Was hid from man's true love by proxy fays,

¹ "The Symphony."

False fauns and rascal gods that stole her
praise.

The nymphs, cold creatures of man's colder
brain,

Chilled Nature's streams till man's warm
heart was fain

Never to lave its love in them again.¹

But the greatest achievement of the first chapter of *Genesis* is that it announced unity, order, and progression in nature. Compare this chapter with any preceding account of the creation of the world and it will be found unique not only in dispossessing gods and goddesses of their former holdings but in staging the hitherto unrecognized qualities of unity, order, and progression. The claim is sometimes made that other and older accounts of creation have been exhumed that anticipate many of the details of the Hebrew record. If this were true it would not invalidate our thesis, for the Hebrew account antiquated at one stroke all preceding accounts and became alone the torch-bearer of the new view. But the claim made for other accounts is not true. Of course many of

¹Compare also Chateaubriand's fine saying in "Le Génie du Christianisme": "Libres de ce troupeau de dieux ridicules qui les bornaient de toutes parts, les bois se sont remplis d'une divinité immense."

the created things mentioned in *Genesis* may be found in other accounts, but there is no unity, no order, no progression.

Take the famous *Hymn to Creation* from *The Veda*.¹ It ends:

How and from what has sprung this Universe?
The gods
Themselves are subsequent to its development.
Who, then, can penetrate the secret of its
rise?
Whether 'twas framed or not, made or not
made, he only
Who in the highest sits, the omniscient Lord,
Assuredly knows all, or haply knows he not.

This is no account of creation. It is only a dignified way of saying, "I know nothing about it and doubt if God Himself knows." Compare *The Sumero-Babylonian Account of the Creation of the World by Marduk*.² The order (or disorder) of creation in this interesting fragment is (1) lands and cities, (2) spirits of the earth, (3) mankind, (4) animals and the great rivers, (5) vegetation and more animals, (6) beginnings of city civilization. Whether written before or after *Gene-*

¹ See "Old Sanskrit Texts," by J. Muir, p. 22.

² See "Beginnings of Hebrew History," Appendix III, by Charles Foster Kent.

sis the Sumero-Babylonian narrative can serve only as a foil to the Hebrew account. The other Babylonian accounts tell of the long war between Marduk and Tiamat or between Bel and Thamte. There are big gods, little gods, middle-sized gods, monsters, vipers, dragons, raging hounds, scorpion men, fish men, everything but unity and system. There are contrasts, startling contrasts, to *Genesis* in these fantastic accounts but, in the strict sense of the word, no parallels. When we remember that the Babylonian civilization was the elder, that it environed the Hebrews from the very beginning of their national career, and that it soon became a part of the cult of the Phenicians and Canaanites, we begin to realize what an epoch in religious thought the first chapter of *Genesis* marks.

It is to my mind one of the strangest ironies of history that this chapter should be singled out as distinctively unscientific. It is the one chapter in the Bible that made science possible. It is the *magna charta* of science. There was no science and there could be no science until men recognized that unity, order, and progression are inherent in nature's processes. How were men brought to this recognition? Two

routes were possible. (1) They could accept the unity, order, and progression of *Genesis* and on this pre-supposition proceed to verification; (2) without knowledge of or belief in *Genesis* they could experiment independently and thus arrive by induction at a knowledge of the orderliness or potential science inherent in nature. Now the history of science proves unmistakably that the first method was that actually followed. The founders of modern science, those on whom the great nineteenth century scientists built, were Bacon, Kepler, Galileo, Harvey, and Newton. These men believed that there was "mind," "thought," "Almighty power," "design," "intelligence," "an intelligent Agent" in nature. They believed it not because they had proved it: proof came later. They believed it because *Genesis* affirmed it.

"I had rather believe," wrote Bacon, "all the legends in the Talmud and the Alcoran than that this universal frame is without a mind." Kepler said: "In reading the secrets of Nature I am thinking the thoughts of God after Him." Kepler was moved to his discoveries, says Benjamin Pierce,¹ "by an exalted faith, anterior and superior to all

¹"Ideality in the Physical Sciences."

science, in the existence of intimate relations between the constitution of man's mind and that of God's firmament." Galileo believed that his own discoveries would be recognized not only as in harmony with *Genesis* but "as the most transcendent displays of Almighty power." Harvey told Robert Boyle that he was led to discover the circulation of the blood by observing that, in the channels through which the blood flows, one set of valves opens toward the heart while another set opens in the opposite direction, and that he could not help believing that "so prudent a cause as nature had not placed so many valves without a design." Newton, in his first letter to Bentley, declares that when he wrote the third book of his *Principia* he "had an eye upon such principles as might work, with considering men, for the belief of a Deity" and he expresses his happiness that it has been found useful for that purpose. In his second letter to Bentley (January 17, 1692-3) he writes: "I am compelled to ascribe the frame of this system to an intelligent Agent."

When Huxley says, therefore, that "Science is the discovery of the rational order that pervades the universe," he states

clearly what might have been, what perhaps would have been. In historic fact, however, the founders of science being themselves the judges, "the rational order that pervades the universe" was not discovered. It was revealed. The discoveries of science made between the years 1600 and 1700—and these laid the foundations for all later science—are, in their last analysis, only verifications, combinations, illustrations, or, better still, acceptations, of the rational order proclaimed for the first time in the first chapter of *Genesis*.

II

Perhaps we have dwelt too long upon a single chapter but this chapter constitutes one of the two divisions into which the book of *Genesis* naturally falls. These divisions we may call Creation and Probation. There is no overlapping. The first chapter is concerned wholly with creation, while the remaining forty-nine chapters develop the idea of probation. In the first chapter the stage is built; in the second chapter the drama begins. The first chapter presents man neither as moral nor as immoral. He is merely one of the animals created. Only one command was laid upon him and it had

reference solely to his physical nature. Conscience was neither invoked nor involved. But in the second chapter God lays upon man an ethical responsibility. Man is not merely the supreme triumph of physical creation. He is a moral being. He can distinguish between good and evil. He is on probation, and he knows it. Now begins his effort to get in tune with the infinite, to establish an *entente cordiale* with his Maker. There is not a suggestion of this struggle or even of man's capacity for such a struggle in the first chapter. It begins in the second. It ends with the last chapter of *Revelation*.

But every commentator on *Genesis*, so far as my reading goes, divides the book, it is true, into two divisions, but these divisions run respectively from the beginning to the call of Abraham and from the call of Abraham to the close. The first division is called, with many subdivisions, the Beginnings of Human History; the second is called the Traditional Ancestors of the Hebrews. But the distinctions overlap and are confusing. Neither is central or organic. To call the first ten or eleven chapters of *Genesis* the Beginnings of Human History is to omit entirely the evenings and

mornings of the first five days. It is to ignore entirely the unity, order, and progression that make the first chapter of *Genesis* incomparable in the world's literature. But, if one is going to make this omission, why not call the whole of *Genesis* the Beginnings of Human History? Was it less human when Abraham appeared? Or, with the same omission, why not say that the whole of *Genesis* is devoted to the Traditional Ancestors of the Hebrews? Adam and Eve, though as yet unnamed, appear in the first chapter and they were traditional ancestors of the Hebrews.

That there are only two divisions in *Genesis* and that these divisions include respectively the first chapter and the remaining forty-nine was certainly the belief of the writer of the book of *Hebrews*. In fact *Genesis* is the only book of the Old Testament that is analyzed and interpreted as a book unit by a writer in the New Testament. In *Hebrews* 11:3 we read: "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." Is not that a perfect interpretation of the first chapter of *Genesis*? Then follows the honor roll of those whose probation is-

sued victoriously in an unclouded faith. They are Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sara, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (*Hebrews* 11:13). Is not that a perfect interpretation of the second division of *Genesis*? Had the author been making a summary instead of an interpretation he would have enumerated the six creative acts in the first chapter of *Genesis* and he would have mentioned Adam and Eve as examples of those in whom probation wrought disaster. He was dealing with principles, however, not details. But that he does not find in the character or career of Abraham anything elementally pivotal is noteworthy. It at least differentiates the author of *Hebrews* from other commentators on *Genesis*. Abraham undoubtedly weighed more than any one else in the list but the scales used were the same for all. His influence was greater but the source of his strength was the source from which all drew. His faith differed in degree but not in kind from the faith of those who went before and those who came immediately after him. His reaction to pro-

bation was distinctively noble but it was not distinctively different from the reaction of others on the honor roll.

May we not say that, if the first chapter of *Genesis* marks an epoch in its attitude to the nature about us, the remaining chapters register a still more significant advance in their attitude to the nature within us? What a group is here assembled! There are no warriors, no poets, no scholars, no demigods, no kings or queens, no men or women famed merely for their looks or physical prowess. Nobody is distinguished merely by wealth or social position. They are just ordinary men and women trying to lift their eyes level to God's command. But they were the world's most beneficent pioneers. We say now confidently that "A man's reach should exceed his grasp," that "One on God's side is a majority," that "Right makes might," that

Howe'er it be, it seems to me,
'Tis only noble to be good,

that

I go to prove my soul!
I see my way as birds their trackless way.
I shall arrive! what time, what circuit first,
I ask not: but unless God send his hail

Or blinding fireballs, sleet or stifling snow,
In some time, his good time, I shall arrive:
He guides me and the bird. In his good time!

These and a thousand other beacon thoughts are commonplaces to-day. Civilization and progress are built upon them. But the heroes of *Genesis* were the first to leave their footprints on the stretches of that lone way. They were not philosophers: philosophy is the theatre of the analytic intellect, not the drama of man. Life was not a theory with them. It was a faith, a conviction, a dedication. Their pathway is now become a highway, but the highway, though broader and less obstructed, still points the way that was first pointed by the pathway. They stumbled many a time, and fell. There were no perfect men among them, but they knew their own failings, knew them because of the very vividness with which they had glimpsed the unchanging ideal. If science got its start in the first chapter of *Genesis*, man's spiritual history harks back as surely to the remaining chapters. If there are no parallels in earlier records to the majestic story of Creation, I need hardly remind you that there is nothing approaching the spiritualizing of Probation to which the major part of *Genesis* is devoted.

The reader will miss much of the charm and challenge of *Genesis* if he fails to note how clearly the leading characters in our group are differentiated. Each is a type but none the less an individual. Each reacted to probation differently but characteristically. There was no surrender of personality. If thrown into their company I believe I could identify most of them, provided they talked freely and *in propria persona*. It is interesting to observe that the rôle that each was to play in the thought of the world could not be determined till the coming of Christ. The light of the Cross streamed backward as well as forward, and in that light much that was only translucent in the Old Testament became transparent in the New. Adam, for example, is hardly more than mentioned in the Old Testament outside of *Genesis*. But in the New Testament he is interpreted. He becomes a *point de repère*, a contrasting type of Christ. The most luminous sentence about him was that of Paul:¹ "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." Adam was neither hero nor villain but only a half-man. Lacking a childhood and youth he lacked also the directive and steadying in-

¹ 1 Corinthians 15: 22.

fluences that come from normally slow development. He and Cain reacted to probation in a way that proved the rule of faith through disobedience to the rule. They spoke a dialect that proclaimed by contrast the existence of a standard speech. Abel has been called¹ "a type of the countless good people who are creatively good for nothing, the respectable negatives who might as well never have been born." But this is more Shavian than Biblical. Abel is rather the symbol of right overthrown by might but still appealing. It is at least worth noting that the first collection of biographical sketches published in the English language was Thomas Fuller's *Abel Redivivus: or the Dead yet Speaking*. It is said of both Enoch and Noah that they "walked with God." But Noah was evidently more of a chance companion than a steady comrade of the Almighty's. Though many pages are given to him he does not live more securely in his four chapters than Enoch in his one verse: "And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him." Is there in human speech a more beautiful or satisfying biography?

¹See "The Bible's Prose Epic of Eve and her Sons," by Eric S. Robertson.

But Abraham looms larger than any of them. There was more driving force in him than in Isaac, less habitual subtlety than in Jacob, but also less lovable-ness than in Joseph. Note the moral energy released in him through the conviction that in him his descendants would be blessed. Neither Isaac, nor Jacob, nor Joseph seems to have felt as acutely or as resiliently the representative responsibility thus imposed. Abraham became the present consciously conditioning the future. Countless thousands were to be made or marred by his loyalty or disloyalty. He is modern society, for science now joins hands with religion in making one's descendants chant forever in one's ears: "Be good for our sake." Others had believed in one God before Abraham, and others had gone forth as leaders and builders of nations yet to be. But it is certain that from Abraham the monotheistic belief has been diffused and diffused unbrokenly. It is certain, too, that never before had a pioneer gone forth to build a nation with faith in God as its foundation and superstructure. Whenever to-day a great reform is inaugurated not by power nor by might but by a single soul in league with God, the journey from Haran begins again. The real

wandering Jew is not Kartaphilos or Ahasuerus, wretched souls on whom the Master was said to have pronounced a curse. It is Abraham, the greatest of all pioneer idealists. He wanders not because he has been cursed but because he has been blessed. He does not seek to escape from his past but to follow the beckonings of his future. His reappearances are not in remote and desolate places but where the eyes of men glimpse a height beyond the farthest height and a glory beyond the utmost glory. "For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

As we study the individual reactions of these pioneers the conviction comes with new force that Hebrew monotheism was a message to the individual, not to the de-individualized group. Modern criticism in its insistence on Hebrew collectivism or national solidarity has strangely perverted this truth. In the pages of much Old Testament criticism of to-day God seems to be little more than the director of a privileged corporation; there is no direct relationship between Him and the individual Hebrew; it is the people as a distinct but collective unit that He addresses. There is not a book in the Old Testament which, if read as a whole,

will not contradict authoritatively the excessive and impersonal nationalism which many commentators seem determined to read into special passages and separate incidents. The ritualism of the Old Testament is, of course, collective; but the religion is individual. *Thou* and *thee* far outnumber *ye* and *you*. There is not a *ye* or *you* in the ten commandments; and even when the plural pronoun occurs in *Leviticus* or *Deuteronomy*, or when the word *people* or *nation* is employed, *thou* and *thee* usually follow at once, so that the initial mass-appeal is broken up and focussed directly and separately upon the individual. Monotheism did, it is true, develop an elaborate ritual which at times threatened if it did not throttle personal responsibility. But in *Genesis* there is hardly a hint of ritualism. Religion is personal. It is an umbrella, not a roof. Back to *Genesis*, then, means not only back to individualism but back to the saving essence that religion had in its beginning, an essence that the prophets vindicated from generation to generation and that the New Testament at last triumphantly restored.

III

By way of summary, did you ever think

of Kant's great saying as an undesigned tribute to *Genesis*? "Two things," he said at the close of his *Critique of Practical Reason*, "fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe, the oftener and the more steadily we reflect upon them: the starry heavens above and the moral law within." These were Kant's two admirations, his two reverences, his two infinities, as they are of every man who thinks resolutely about them. Necessity is the law of the first, said Kant, liberty of the second. On the banner of the first is written *must*, on that of the second *ought*. Is it not remarkable that the first book of the Bible faces precisely the two mysteries that moved the awe of the great philosopher, Creation and Probation? The last word of human philosophy is thus the first word of the Bible. The two twin summits that have challenged the climbers of all ages are the starting-places of *Genesis*. But there is a difference. To the modern philosopher there were mists upon the summits; to the author of *Genesis* there was sunlight. Two infinities but one faith! The synthesis is in the first words of *Genesis*: "In the beginning, God."

III

ESTHER

I

ESTHER has always seemed to me the best told story in the Bible. Whoever wrote it was a master in the art of omitting non-essentials and of concentrating attention upon what really counted. He knew how to grip his reader's attention at the start, how to mass or distribute his details in harmony with his main design, and how to make each part of the narrative contribute its quota to the larger or superintending purpose. I do not forget the story of Joseph, the idyllic charm of *Ruth*, or the fragments of vivid epics found in *Judges*. But *Esther*, more than any of these, seems to me a sort of anticipation of an art that is to-day considered almost distinctively American,—I mean the art of the modern short story. The constitution of this latest of literary *genres* was drawn up by Poe when he wrote, in 1842, that the goal of the writer should not be background, plot, or character

but the interweaving of these to produce a definite and preconceived effect. "If his very initial sentence," says Poe, "tend not to the outbringing of this effect, then he has failed in his first step. In the whole composition there should be no word written of which the tendency, direct or indirect, is not to the one preëstablished design."

Not only does *Esther* meet this requirement of the modern short story but it surpasses all short stories, ancient and modern, in its annually recurrent service. A few days ago I clipped the following announcement from a New York daily paper:

The celebration of the feast of Purim will commence this evening and will continue for twenty-four hours. This is a festival of the Jews celebrated on the fourteenth day of the month of Adar and was ordained to commemorate the deliverance of the Jews from national destruction by the Persians, as narrated in the Book of Esther. The festival of Purim is now a day of rejoicing, of exchanging of gifts among friends and giving liberally to the poor. Its observance in the synagogue is limited to the reading of the Book of Esther, but in the homes of the orthodox Jews the celebration is marked by social parties, masquerades, and other entertainments.

Thus for more than two thousand years *Esther* has been read aloud once a year in all Jewish synagogues. The name of Haman is still greeted with jeers, the name of Esther with cheers. It is interesting to remember that Christ Himself in early boyhood must have joined in the acclaim rendered to Esther at this festival, and, if He ever jeered at any one, He jeered at the name of the monster who sought her life and the life of her people. Just as Dickens's *Christmas Carol* revived and renationalized the waning celebration of Christmas in England, so the book of *Esther* revived and renationalized the receding festival of Purim. Just as the annual reading of our Declaration of Independence recalls and rededicates to a wider service our heroic past, so the annual reading of *Esther* has made of a Jewish past a continuous and continuing present. We are not surprised when history tells us of some great state paper, or national epic, or patriotic song that has served for centuries to band together a people. But for a short story this is a new office. *Esther*, then, is unique not only in its modern structure but in its history and age-long service.

II

One of the distinctive excellencies of the story lies in the handling of the background and in making it subserve the underlying purpose of the narrative. You remember that Shakespeare begins *Macbeth* with the appearance of the witches who chant

Fair is foul and foul is fair.

This is one of the great keynote scenes in modern literature. Fair things were in fact to prove foul, and foul things fair; friends were to appear as enemies and enemies were to be disguised as friends. The entire play pivots around this chant of the witches. With equal art *Esther* begins with Persian bigness that was not greatness and pits consistently against it Jewish greatness that was not bigness. The Persian king ruled over one hundred and twenty-seven provinces; the Persian banquet lasted one hundred and eighty days and was topped off by a luncheon of seven days; the gallows prepared for Mordecai was eighty-three feet high; the money to be wrested from the Jews was eighteen million dollars. Against this background we see only a captive Jewish orphan, named Esther, and her cousin,

named Mordecai. "Little is big and big is little" is the unsung refrain that binds together the diverse incidents of the story as the witches' words bind together the diverse incidents of Shakespeare's play.

Another element of the background that intensifies the patriotic appeal is the foreign *locale*. The plot takes place not in Jewish Jerusalem but in Persian and pagan Shushan. Joseph in Egypt, Livingstone in Central Africa, Chinese Gordon in Nubia, Franklin in Paris, Dewey in Manila, Gerard in Berlin stir our patriotism far more than if the same courage or loyalty had been shown at home. The thought of Esther in the far-away land, under alien skies and alien institutions, denied the reassurance of home faces and neighbor ways, beyond the beckoning of the hills and streams that she knew so well, this sends a challenge to our interest and admiration impossible in the case of a Judean *locale*.

III

The plot may be skeletonized as follows:

- I. Vashti dethroned. Enter Queen Esther (1: 1-2: 20).
- II. Haman vs. Mordecai. Haman victorious (2: 21-3: 15).

- III. "Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" (4:1-5:8).
- IV. Between banquets (5:9-6:14).
- V. The second banquet (7:1-7:9).
- VI. Victory (7:10-9:19).
- VII. The Feast of Purim (9:20-9:32).
- VIII. See for fuller details "The Chronicles of the Kings of Media and Persia" (10:1-10:3).

The incidents move in a leisurely way until Esther proposes a second banquet (5:8). I do not know why she deferred her petition from the first banquet to the second, but I do know that the period "Between banquets (5:9-6:14)" is a bit of narrative handling unsurpassed even in the Bible. It stamps the author as one of the great narrative artists. It marks the emergence in Hebrew literature of a technique that the critics had considered non-existent till the advent of Poe, DeMaupassant, Kipling, and O. Henry. The mere facts told in the interim between the two banquets are negligible as facts. If you are reading for facts alone, for bald objective happenings, you may omit this section entirely. The verse that precedes the section and the verse that follows it seem themselves unaware of what lies between. Note how they blend

into each other: "If I have found favor in the sight of the king, and if it please the king to grant my petition and to perform my request, let the king and Haman come to the banquet that I shall prepare for them, and I will do to-morrow as the king hath said. . . . So the king and Haman came to banquet with Esther the queen." But between those two verses there are interposed twenty verses which, more than any other twenty verses in the story, lift the plot out of the category of routine chronicle and give it a secure place among the masterpieces of narrative literature.

These twenty verses seem commissioned by the author to shadow Haman from banquet to banquet. "Trail him," the order would seem, "and report his words, his deeds, his thoughts. He has hitherto been a mere symbol, an impersonal embodiment of cruelty and sycophancy. Show him to us not on dress parade but at home with wife and friends. The other characters in the story have personality. Invest him with it, too. Let him not only point a moral but stand for all time as a deterrent type of actual flesh and blood." The detective verses play their part well. Let us follow them:

Haman hurries home from the first banquet, calls for his wife and friends, tells them exultingly of the honor shown him, and hints still greater honor at the banquet set for to-morrow. "Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate." His wife and friends suggest that a gallows be erected at once for Mordecai and that at the forthcoming banquet the king's consent be secured for an immediate execution. The gallows is erected during the night but "On that night could not the king sleep." There is something ominous in the tread of the little monosyllables. The king's insomnia marks in fact a crisis in the story; but, before the tragedy falls, there intervenes the most humorous scene in the Bible. Like the knocking at the gate in *Macbeth* it is a buffer scene thrust between the tenseness that precedes and the heightened tenseness that is to follow. Haman arrives and learns that the king has just asked for him. His majesty's much banqueting, it seems, had dulled his memory of current events. So, while he lies tossing and while not a parasang away the finishing touches are being put on the gallows, he asks that some one read to him the record of recent happenings. Learning that one named Mordecai had saved his majesty's life a few days before but had gone unrewarded, the

king wakes to a sense of obligation rightly incurred but strangely overlooked. "Who is in the court?" he asks. "Haman." Haman, knowing nothing of the reading, was at that very moment conning his petition about Mordecai and the gallows. As he enters and salutes, the king asks yawningly: "What shall be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honor?" Haman had his answer pat. The very elaborateness of it shows that the question had long been anticipated and that the answer had probably been formulated after a conference with his wife and friends: "Let the royal apparel be brought which the king useth to wear, and the horse that the king rideth upon, and the crown royal which is set upon his head. And let this apparel and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes, that they may array the man withal whom the king delighteth to honor, and bring him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaim before him, Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honor." Was there ever a better autobiography in miniature?

Did the king smile as he answered, "Do even so to Mordecai the Jew"? I think not. But I know that Jewish men and women and boys and girls, peeping timidly from half opened doors, smiled at that strange proces-

sion as they had never smiled before. And every year the procession is renewed at the Feast of Purim. Down through the centuries pedestrian Haman still solemnly stalks leading the horse for equestrian Mordecai; and the smiles break into laughter, for faith is rekindled and old memories are stirred and patriotism flames anew upon its oldest and most sacred altars. Through what streets of Shushan the procession wound we are not told. Not many Jewish homes, I think, were omitted; but the street that led by Haman's home was not on the route. His wife and friends knew nothing of it all till he "hasted to his house mourning and having his head covered" and told them what had befallen him. He had but a moment to stay, for the hour of the second banquet had come. His wife and friends found time, however, to tell him as he passed out of the door, "If Mordecai be of the seed of the Jews, before whom thou hast begun to fall, thou shalt not prevail against him, but shalt surely fall before him." There was no time to answer, for "while they were yet talking with him, came the king's chamberlains and hasted to bring Haman unto the banquet that Esther had prepared."

Our twenty verses flow back now into the central current. Their *métier* has been to

reveal the kind of man that Haman really and inwardly was. When he swings at nightfall from the gallows that he had erected for Mordecai, our moral sense is satisfied because our detective verses have made the record clear against him, have brought into sharp relief his essential and ineradicable wolfishness, and thus rendered his execution a necessity in the forward march of mercy and righteousness.

IV

But the characters are to me more interesting than the plot. The author of the story had not only an unerring feeling for background and incident but an equally sure eye for character traits. Each character is portrayed from within. A few deft strokes and the controlling motives stand clearly limned. In no other book of the Bible is there a more effective use of conversation, the direct words being given wherever vividness is desired. Ahasuerus, Memucan, Haman, Mordecai, and Esther all speak in the first person and all speak self-revealingly. This use of direct discourse is peculiarly a mark of the modern short story and is thus another link binding the technique of *Esther* to our own times. To feel the

superiority of the direct form of statement here employed, recast some of the conversations and note the loss in force and appeal. Instead of "Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" suppose the form had been: "Mordecai asked Esther if she was acquainted with any one who knew whether she was come to the kingdom for such a time as that." The skeleton remains, but the life has gone.

As in *Genesis*, so in *Esther*, each character is a type but also an individual. The two terms are often confused. The writer of *Esther*, like Shakespeare, probably had no conscious thought of the distinction here made between the individual and the type; but both wrote from life and in life the distinction is writ large upon every page. An individual character, whether in life or literature, is a character that is sharply differentiated from all other characters. The differential may be physical or mental or moral, an excellence or a defect, an asset or a liability. Typical characters, on the contrary, embody some well-known virtue or vice, some commonplace of philosophy, some widely diffused principle of thought or action, some everyday epidemic of behavior,

and embody it so exclusively that the person yields to the trait. The individual character stands for one, the type character for many. The individual character is singular in form and function; the type character is singular in form, but like our collective nouns, *crowd*, *congregation*, *army*, *navy*, plural in function. It is easy to see and say that a character is individual but we cannot pronounce a character typical until our circuit of knowledge enables us to classify him. The use of the term typical, therefore, is measured wholly by the range and variety of characters, real or fictive, that we know. All characters are individual to children but increasingly typical to their parents. It is the type qualities that the Bible writers chiefly stress and it is these in *Esther* that I shall touch upon during the remainder of the hour.

Ahasuerus is a tank that runs blood or wine according to the hand that turns the spigot. Though he was the source of all executive power in the story he himself originates nothing. The dethronement of Vashti, the method of selecting her successor, the proposed destruction of the Jews, the counter decree, the honor to Mordecai, the execution of Haman, not one of

these was proposed by the king. He only adopted them. Read the record again and observe how accurately the author has caught the note of majestic inertia that characterizes the Oriental monarch. Among the leading characters of the story he alone is stationary, all the others passing from high to low or low to high as the story advances. He remains at the end the same vast and vacant stretch of immobility that he was at the beginning. He, by the way, is our old friend Xerxes, who, according to Herodotus, ordered three hundred stripes to be inflicted on the ocean because his ships had been dashed to pieces and commanded that the Phenician mechanics who built the ships should be put to death. If you think these measures show a reach of self-origination beyond the range of Xerxes as he is pictured in *Esther*, turn again to Herodotus and you will find that, true to type, Xerxes is represented as proposing neither penalty. Here again he merely seconds and adopts. Perhaps an exception should be made in the case of the many banquets occurring in *Esther*. I am inclined to think that his majesty was here the original proponent. The word "banquet," it may be added, occurs twenty times in *Esther*.

and only twenty times in the remaining thirty-eight books of the Old Testament. In other words, Ahasuerus and his trencher-mates consumed as much in five days as had been consumed by all the other Old Testament characters from *Genesis* to *Malachi*. Ahasuerus was used for good in the story but he deserves and receives no credit for it. He is not so much a character, after all, as a state of mind or, better still, a state of body. No man ever missed a greater opportunity. He was brought face to face with the two greatest world-civilizations in history, Hebraism and Hellenism; but, understanding neither, he remains only a muddy place in the road along which Greek and Hebrew passed to world conquest.

Haman was a fit minister for his king. Though a blend of vanity and cruelty and cowardice he was not without some power of initiative. But egotism had destroyed all sense of proportion in him. A sense of humor, that stabilizer of national and individual character, was thus impossible to him. He begets laughter but was incapable of sharing it. He lives in history as one who, better than in Hamlet's immortal phrase, was "hoist with his own petard," the petard in Haman's case being a gallows

eighty-three feet high. He typifies also the just fate of the man who, spurred by the hate of one, includes in his scheme of extermination a whole people. "And he thought scorn to lay hands on Mordecai alone; for they had shewed him the people of Mordecai: wherefore Haman sought to destroy all the Jews that were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus, even the people of Mordecai." Collective vengeance never received a better illustration nor a more exemplary or lustrous punishment.

Mordecai is altogether admirable in refusing to kowtow to Haman and in his unselfish devotion to his fair cousin. The cause of the rooted enmity between him and Haman has been differently explained. But does it need explanation? It may have been that Haman wore on his person some idolatrous symbol to which Mordecai would not do obeisance; it may have been that Mordecai, a Benjamite, recognized in Haman, the Amalekite, an ancestral foe (1 *Samuel* 15:33). But neither supposition is necessary and both do discredit to the kind of motivation employed by the author. Had he intended either of these motives to be central in the character of Mordecai he would have hinted or plainly indicated as

much. What he evidently meant us to see as central and controlling in Mordecai's conduct was a simple loyalty to the faith of his fathers that forbade the low and servile salaam to arrogant and aggressive paganism. "But Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence." Where he felt no reverence, Mordecai would not flaunt the symbol of reverence. He would not commission his body to tell the lie that his spirit scorned to tell.

But Esther is, of course, the central character. She is the only character in the story and one of the few in the Bible whose personal appearance is described and described unforgettably. Not only was she "fair and beautiful" but she "obtained favor in the sight of all them that looked upon her." The words are peculiarly presentive and pictorial. Esther appears before us not only as "fair" but as winning "favor." There was something about her beauty that evoked not only admiration but good will. She was, I take it, a blend of Juliet and Cordelia, of Homer's Helen and Dante's Beatrice.

But it is not her beauty that has sent her name down the ages. It is not her beauty that makes her the central and centralizing

character in the story. It is her hospitality to the great question put by Mordecai: "Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" You will miss the distinctive note of the whole book if you do not weigh well the import of this question, for Esther's instant reaction to it marks the spiritual crisis of the book. Imagine the vacant and bovine countenance that would have been turned upon you if you had asked Ahasuerus or any of his subjects this penetrating question. But, if I mistake not, the question was an habitual one with Mordecai and Esther. It represents an attitude rather than a gesture, a bit of Palestinian sky still visible from Persian soil, a strain of Judean music still heard amid the discords of pagan captivity. It is the one question in the book that runs the line of cleavage between heathen and Hebrew thought. By it and its answer we measure the altitude of the spiritual levels on which the captive Jews were living. They brought with them from Jerusalem and still cherished in Shushan the conviction that God had a purpose in each human life; that events were to be scrutinized for divine beckonings; that what was impenetrable to unbelief, or merely translucent to hope, was

transparent to faith; that national tragedies, like the captivity in Persia, had not only a collective meaning for the Jewish people but an individual meaning for each believing Jew; that chance and accident and fate had no place in the Jewish vocabulary; that a change of *locale* did not mean a change of *morale*; and that human life itself, though crowned with queenship, was to be thrown unhesitatingly into the scales if God's purpose could thereby find fulfillment.

If Esther had been even tintured by Persian fatalism she would have met Mordecai's question by countering on the futility of attempting to stay the march of things immutably ordered. Certainly it seemed futile, for not only had the decree of the king been sealed and sent but all petitionary access to his person had been denied. The Persian attitude to Mordecai's query finds its perfect expression in the later lines of one of Persia's greatest poets:

The moving finger writes and having writ
Moves on, nor all your Piety nor Wit
Shall lure it back to cancel half a line
Nor all your tears wash out a word of it.

Or, if Esther had not been tintured by Persian thought but had only grown lax

in her hold on Jewish thought, she would at least have denied the applicability of such a question to her. "Am I not queen?" she might have said. "Why I came to the land of Persia is no longer debatable. See my robes and my crown. My queenship is the answer." Is there not a lesson for us here? Is success, mere success, ever an answer to the great "Who knoweth whether?" that knocks sooner or later at the door of each of us when we front a crisis? "Prosperity," says Bacon, "is the blessing of the Old Testament; adversity is the blessing of the New." This is not quite just to the Old Testament or to the New. Esther, at any rate, looked on her prosperity not as an end in itself but as only a means to an end.

I have called this question with its answer the crisis of the story, and so it is. It is the result of all that has gone before and the cause of all that follows; it is the fruit of the past, the seed of the future. Background, plot, and characters would, without this question and answer, be a shell without a kernel, a storage battery without power, a body without life, a wheel without an axle. "If his very initial sentence," says Poe,—read the lines again and see if first

sentence and last sentence do not find in this question their common goal and trysting-place.

But this victorious question and answer control not only the structure but the spiritual significance of the story. "As certain objects," says William James,¹ "naturally awaken love, anger, or cupidity, so certain ideas naturally awaken the energies of loyalty, courage, endurance, or devotion. When these ideas are effective in an individual's life, their effect is often very great indeed. They may transfigure it, unlocking innumerable powers which, but for the idea, would never have come into play." Among these "energy-releasing ideas" Professor James mentions "Flag," "Union," "Monroe Doctrine," "Truth," "Science," "Liberty."

Among energy-releasing questions I should place first, "Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" Not only did it unlock a reservoir of latent power in Esther but since her time men have gone to the stake, have built and torn down principalities and powers, have faced smiling a hostile world, have moulded the opinion of centuries, and transformed the conduct of ages on the

¹"The Energies of Men."

dynamic conviction that they had been sent to the kingdom "for such a time as this."

Esther is more than a short story. It is a bit of constructive idealism flawlessly conceived and faultlessly embodied.

IV:

JOB

I

TO feel the greatness of this book and to estimate its unique contribution to Old Testament thought, let me suggest that you consider this problem: What would be the effect on the character of a community if every man in it thought that all adversity, whether of body, mind, or estate, was caused by sin secretly committed and resolutely unconfessed? Your neighbor has money in a supposedly sound bank and wakes to find his hope of security for old age and of competence for those dependent upon him swept away in a night. You, a representative of the thought of such a community, could only say by way of comfort: "Confess your guilt and thus stay the further impoverishment that will surely attend upon sin knowingly committed but publicly denied." The same neighbor loses by some ravenous epidemic all of his sons

and daughters. "Villain and hypocrite," you must say to him, "have you no feeling for those near and dear to you? Proclaim your crime, keep back nothing, and thus arrest if you cannot avert the just doom of a righteous God upon the wider circle of those whom you are supposed to love." Your neighbor again wakes to find his body caught in the grip of a prolonged and torturing disease. Your prompt and consistent diagnosis is: "Every pang that you suffer is a penalty for divine law violated with full knowledge but with a craft and cunning that have hitherto evaded the scrutiny of your friends. Tell us all about it and thus, if you do not regain health, you may at least escape an impending and retributive death."

I cannot imagine a tyranny more merciless than the sovereignty of a philosophy like that would impose. Weakness is wickedness; all kinds and degrees of suffering become but so many incitements to Pharisaical denunciation; comfort, sympathy, kindness, generosity, fellowship,—why, these would be impossible and unthinkable in a community governed by so heartless a code. But suppose that not only a community was so infected but the very fiber of a nation's

faith; suppose, too, that this nation was the nation from which the world's Saviour was to come, and this faith the faith that in a purer form was destined to alleviate and consecrate the very sufferings which this detestable philosophy stigmatized. Surely some national corrective would be needed and needed urgently. Such a corrective is the book of *Job*.

If you are inclined to say, "Why, this doctrine seems to me so pagan and abhorrent as not to deserve so elaborate a refutation," let me remind you that the book of *Job* not only refutes the old doctrine but substitutes the doctrine of Christ in its stead; that the patriarchal period of Jewish history with its pictures of teeming families, fields, and flocks, and with its advanced hygienic code, undoubtedly predisposed the nation to regard prosperity as inseparable from piety; that Christ more than once had to rebuke the same misinterpretation of current disaster; that the doctrine survives to-day in exact proportion as men believe blindly in a superior power but are ignorant of the existence of the laws of nature; that disease and death *are* in most cases traceable to violations of nature's laws, though these laws are of course not moral, their violation

being due to ignorance, not to sin; and that, as Christ was Himself to be, like Job, "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," the persistence of this doctrine without canonical check would have rendered His mission the more difficult and His character the more problematical.

II

Of the three divisions into which *Job* falls,—

- I. Job Chosen for Testing (1-2),
- II. Job and His Friends (3-37),
- III. Job and God (38-42),

the first marks the central contribution of the book to the problem discussed. In these two chapters God is revealed as permitting Job to suffer in body, mind, and estate, not as a penalty but as a prerogative; not to appease the divine nature but to vindicate human nature; not to cast the patriarch down but to build him up; not because he was good and happy but because he could be made better and happier; not to fetter him in pain but to release in him those spiritual powers and appetencies of whose existence Job was himself ignorant till the

days of testing came. That the level of these two chapters was far above the level of contemporary thought is proved by the fact that not one of Job's friends even hinted at such an explanation of his suffering.

These two chapters, though they have little of the imagery and eloquence of the succeeding chapters, mark one of the tablelands of divine truth. It was a pivotal moment in Hebrew history when the Maker of men was self-revealed as viewing character not as protected innocence but as disciplined virtue; as proclaiming that

Only the prism's obstruction shows aright
The secret of a sunbeam, breaks its light
Into the jewelled bow from blankest white;

as bidding His followers in all after-ages to see in affliction not the mailed fist but the beckoning hand. The world had to wait till Christ came before it was to receive a revelation so energizing in its appeal or so assuaging in its effect.

Like all great revelations in the Bible, this revelation of the ministry of adversity corresponded to an innate yearning of humanity and has found instant and triumphant verification wherever men have risen

on "stepping-stones of their dead selves to higher things." I need hardly remind you that Goethe took the entire thought-process of *Faust* from these two chapters or that "the land of Uz" became at once not so much a geographical expression as the challenge of a new faith and the pæan of a new hope. The real land of Uz is not on the map. It is in the hearts of those who have passed through night to light, through storm to calm, through frost to spring, through woe to weal; who have built stepping-stones of stumbling-blocks; who have found that the *via crucis* is but another name for the *via lucis*.

III

But can man meet the test? Has he enough moral resilience to "find in loss a gain to match"? If the first two chapters are a revelation of the character of God, the thirty-five chapters that follow contain a corresponding revelation of the character of man. As far as the book of *Job* may be called a problem, these two divisions state it and solve it. Had Job known the contents of chapters one and two, had he been told that God was with him in his trial and permitted it only to educe the man in him

and to bless mankind through him, the struggle would not have been so long or so severe. If I estimate the character of Job aright, it would hardly have been a struggle at all. But Job did not know. He was thrown back on the fundamentals of his faith, on the bare essentials of his character. He was chosen as a test case to prove whether or not humanity could in the fire of affliction consume its dross and refine its gold. "The moral life of man," says Froude, "is like the flight of a bird in the air. He is sustained only by effort, and when he ceases to exert himself he falls." Carlyle and Browning have polarized the same stimulant thought in a hundred ways. But Job wrought out the great truth in the forge of his own experience long before it became a problem of psychology or a theme of literature.

He did it too in solitariness that was intensified by the presence of four counselors who parroted the conventional commonplaces of the day but whose amazing self-righteousness put acid in Job's wounds instead of oil. It is hardly worth while to individualize these men. There were minor differences, it is true, but they all revolved around the conviction that Job had com-

mitted some monstrous crime and was too cowardly to confess it. I have always felt a measure of gratitude to them because they made Job talk. Without them he would probably have remained silent, and the result of his testing would have been summed up for us at the end in a general and impersonal way. The quartet deserve no credit for it, but they compelled Job to self-defense through self-expression and thus made these chapters a sort of spiritual autobiography.

But Job's replies reveal more than his own nature. They reveal the possibilities of language in the expression of soaring and elusive thought. You will miss much of the invigorating appeal of this book if you do not see in Job one of the sovereigns of speech. From his first word to his last he holds us in a sort of spell not merely because he speaks for us but because he is endowed with a range and adequacy and wizardry of utterance beyond the reach of any mortal that ever traversed that dim region of half lights and tried to tell what he saw. Pain, grief, doubt, dejection, these usually inhibit speech; but in this man they release and illumine it. Coleridge once defined dejection as

A drowsy, stifled, unimpassioned grief,
Which finds no natural outlet or relief
In word, or sigh, or tear.

That may be your dejection or mine, but it was not Job's. Dejection for him unlocked the treasuries of thought and feeling, of hope and will, of imagery and vision, and gave to each its fitting form and investiture.

I do not know whether Job's vocabulary has ever been counted as they have counted Milton's and Shakespeare's. The mere number of words would not be large; but in the use of these words, in making concrete terms like "day," "night," "stars," "twilight," "sea," "brook," "wind," "cloud," "mountain," "snow," "storm," throw their changing splendors upon the arena of his struggle, in turning the currents of experience into the central channel of expression, Job remains the supreme Old Testament model. Note the singing quality in him that finds beauty where only blankness and bleakness had been before. Most of us in Job's first mood would have said, "I wish I had never been born," and let it go at that. But Job moves to the dark thought in great spirals of sombre imagery: "Let

the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, 'There is a man child conceived. Let that day be darkness; let not God regard it from above, neither let the light shine upon it. Let darkness and the shadow of death stain it; let a cloud dwell upon it; let the blackness of the day terrify it. As for that night, let darkness seize upon it; let it not be joined unto the days of the year, let it not come into the number of the months. Lo, let that night be solitary, let no joyful voice come therein. Let them curse it that curse the day, who are ready to raise up their mourning. Let the stars of the twilight thereof be dark; let it look for light, but have none; neither let it see the dawning of the day" (3:3-9).

He longs for the grave and the grave is shot through with a strange and haunting beauty: "There the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary be at rest. There the prisoners rest together; they hear not the voice of the oppressor. The small and the great are there; and the servant is free from his master" (3:17-19). He cries out for wisdom and understanding, and in the very cry builds a palace for them to dwell in: "Where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of under-

standing? Man knoweth not the price thereof; neither is it found in the land of the living. The depth saith, It is not in me: and the sea saith, It is not with me. It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof. It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire. The gold and the crystal cannot equal it: and the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold. No mention shall be made of coral, or of pearls: for the price of wisdom is above rubies. The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it, neither shall it be valued with pure gold. Whence then cometh wisdom, and where is the place of understanding, seeing it is hid from the eyes of all living, and kept close from the fowls of the air? Destruction and death say, We have heard the fame thereof with our ears. God understandeth the way thereof, and he knoweth the place thereof; for he looketh to the ends of the earth, and seeth under the whole heaven, to make the weight for the winds; and he weigheth the waters by measure. When he made a decree for the rain, and a way for the lightning of the thunder, then did he see it and declare it; he prepared it, yea, and searched it out. And unto man he said,

Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding" (28:12-28).

But the resources of sudden and swift condensation are his also: "No doubt but ye are the people and wisdom shall die with you" (12:2). Nothing can be added to that; its victims are pilloried forever. The whole sweep of God's creative energy he curdles disdainfully in a sentence: "By his spirit he hath garnished the heavens; his hand hath formed the crooked serpent" (26:13). His own wretchedness lives forever in a phrase: "I am a brother to dragons, and a companion to owls" (30:29).

Thomas Hughes says of Tom Brown's new fishing-rod: "It had play enough to throw a midge tied on a single hair against the wind, and strength enough to hold a grampus." The words are true of Job's power of speech. He did not have to compel words or ideas to do his bidding. They came when he beckoned and gave him all that they had of play and power, of sweep and challenge, to make his message find lodgment wherever in all the ages men should toil up from half knowledge to fuller knowledge or from voicelessness to articulatness. He touches nothing that does not

become less angular, less fragmentary, less circumscribed. He thought not in parts but in wholes, not in hemispheres but in spheres, not in terms of *here* and *now* but of *everywhere* and *always*. He muffles the ache of the actual not by evasion or half statement but by a presentation so large, so representative, so luminous that his very litany has become both guide and solace. "The greatest thing a human soul ever does," says Ruskin, "is to see something and to tell what it saw. To see clearly is poetry, prophecy, and religion all in one."

Thus if Job had not fought his way out, if he had remained in the valley, this part of the book would still be a bond of comradeship in trial, because to be articulate is the first step to self-recovery. He would at least have probed the problem; he would have let air and sunlight in even if he himself had not found a way out. The spokesman precedes the leader, and to be the spokesman for those in the valley is at least to hint the victor on the heights.

But Job is not merely the spokesman of those in the valley; he is the spokesman of those who climb from the valley to the heights. He is not a stationary character.

This differentiates him at once from his four friends. They make their exit from the same plane as that on which they made their entry. There is thought activity in them but no more progress than that made by a caged squirrel whirling the wheel of his little prison. But Job battles his way up and out. The world quotes him not only as voice for the voiceless but as hope for the hopeless. I need hardly remind you that, in spite of the usual classification, Job was never a sceptic. He had faith but wanted knowledge. His friends substituted superficial knowledge for fundamental faith and thus contributed nothing to the controversy except to intensify Job's sense of separation from God and to make us realize how urgently the times called for a new philosophy of human suffering.

The comparison of Job with Prometheus is not fruitful. Prometheus took the side of man against the Olympians whom he knew to be unmitigated rascals. There is no analogy here. In the case of Œdipus, with whom comparison is so frequently made, the central difference is that the Greek hero knew that he had done a monstrous thing while the Hebrew knew that he had not. This difference is so vital that

comparison is only contrast. Little more can be said of the parallel drawn between Job and Tabu-utul-Bel, the so-called Babylonian Job.¹ The latter cries out in his misery:

The diviner has not improved the condition
of my sickness;

The duration of my illness the seer could not
state;

The god helped me not, my hand he took not;

The goddess pitied me not, she came not to
my side.

But a conjurer was found at last through
whose magic the sufferer gained a triune
blessing: he could talk, swallow, and spit:

The tongue, which had stiffened so that it
could not be raised—

He relieved its thickness, so its words could
be understood.

The gullet, which was compressed, stopped
as with a plug—

He healed its contraction, it worked like a flute.

My spittle which was stopped so that it was
not secreted—

He removed its fetter, he opened its lock.

¹ See George A. Barton's "Archæology and the Bible" (1917), pp. 392-396; "Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archæology," X, 478; and Sir Henry C. Rawlinson's "Cuneiform Inscriptions," IV, 60.

Equally unfruitful will be the attempt to weigh nicely the arguments of the five contestants as arguments, to appraise them in terms of logical reply and counter-reply, to grade their relevancy or irrelevancy to what the preceding speaker has said. Argumentation in our sense, argumentation as a Burke or a Marshall or a Webster employed it, was unknown to the Hebrew. His language was not adapted to it. Connectives and particles, those *indicia* of voice and gesture on which all orderly and interrelated argumentation is dependent, are lacking in Hebrew though they swarm in Greek. The speeches of Job and his friends are not arguments; they are monologues, connected sometimes at the beginning with what the preceding speaker has said, but soaring free at the first opportunity and becoming more and more unrelated and self-originated as each speaker dips deeper into his own viewpoint.

The superior interest in the content of Job's speeches does not lie, then, in their argument as such. It lies in their triumphant advance from seeming despair to faith and hope. A great nature, shaken to its center, is finding itself, not through the counsel of friends but in spite of such coun-

sel. The speeches of these friends are but so many wheels revolving on the same axle. But Job's speeches are not circular but progressive. They form a ladder with firm-set and luminous rounds. To find these rounds, to catch the radiance of the pinnacle moments that light the way up, to mount with Job from strength to strength, this is the offering of these chapters; this it is that has given them their immortality 'of service, their energy-releasing influence upon their readers. Perhaps no two of us would agree in our count of these moments, but none of us, I am sure, would omit such sayings as:

"Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him" (13:15).

"My witness is in heaven and my record is on high" (16:19).

"I know that my redeemer liveth" (19:25).

"When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold" (23:10).

Each of these is a victory in itself and the herald of a greater victory yet to be; each marks an altitude won and not lost again; each is a mile-stone for nations as well as for individuals; each shows the essential oneness of heroes in the Old Testament and those in the New; each shows the wisdom of

God in making probation the criterion of the soul's worth, and the ability of the soul amid all menaces to meet the test. Browning might well have had Job in mind when he wrote:

No, when the fight begins within himself,
A man's worth something. God stoops o'er
his head,
Satan looks up between his feet—both tug—
He's left, himself, i' the middle: the soul
wakes
And grows. Prolong that battle through his
life!
Never leave growing till the life to come!

One might indeed take these four sayings of Job and by relating them one to the other make of them a sort of system of faith triumphant. I shall not attempt it but I wish you to notice that when Job utters the first of these sayings the book passes at once from the category of the Greek drama, governed by remorseless fatality, to the plane of the Shakespearean drama, where personal will and faith and hope have a chance to win out over an imposed and implacable doom. But more significant still is Job's last quoted saying, "When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." Here he rises level to the height of the first two

chapters. He discovers and vindicates without God's interposition the very principle that was at issue in his trial. Is suffering punitive or is it remedial? Or, if we think it punitive at first, may we so accept and assimilate it as to make it remedial? Satan, who, as the world's prosecuting attorney, ought to have known better, believed that Job would interpret his affliction as unmerited and intolerable punishment; that he would not bear up under it; that, when he found the traditional contract between property and piety dissolved, he would blaspheme and disintegrate: "Doth Job fear God for naught? Hast thou not made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face" (1: 9-11).

But Job has reached an altitude at which blasphemy is forever impossible. His character instead of disintegrating crystallizes. When he identifies his own trial with the familiar process of the refiner refining his gold, his feet are upon a rock. He has discovered the spiritual law of gravitation and

has submitted himself to it. In exact proportion as his affliction increases he knows that there will be an increase of gold and a decrease of dross. Had he merely remained silent in his trial, had he merely *not* cursed God, Satan would have lost but God and humanity would not have won. When, however, he does not curse but recognizes remedial discipline in his chastisement, he not only vanquishes Satan but vindicates God and the human soul. He did more. He made that ash heap in the Old Testament prophesy the Cross in the New.

IV

The third part of the book of *Job*, that embracing chapters 38–42, has been more diversely interpreted than any other equal section of the Old Testament. It has been said that it is the addition of a later and less skilful hand, that it is irrelevant to the main issue, and thus not a worthy or fitting conclusion to what has gone before. An unnamed writer in *The Unpopular Review*¹ summarizes as follows: “The friends of Job argued that since he was unfortunate he must be wicked. Job knew better. But the author of the book had no solution. His

¹See issue for January-March, 1917.

Jehovah, who should deliver the conclusion of the whole matter and close the discussion, delivers magnificent poetry, but throws no light on the subject, save the glare of his indignation that anything so insignificant as man should have any opinion about it. Job was silenced but not answered. The opinion of the author would appear to be that the problem was humanly insoluble."

Before considering this facile indictment more in detail, let us read and reread the concluding part of *Job*. The patriarch is rebuked not for the things that he had said wisely but for the things that he had said unwisely. For the wise and brave things that he had said he receives the Lord's express commendation. "For ye," says the Lord, referring to Job's friends, "have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath" (42:7). But a child can see that Job had mingled mere glitter with his gold, that he had said many things that in a more tranquil mood he would regret and did regret: "Therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not" (42:3). If the author of the book had represented God as approving all that Job had said, he would have compromised the character of the In-

finite and made the conclusion of the book a jarring anticlimax. Think what strange inferences you would have to draw as to the character of God if you were told that He commended every complaint, every protest, every half truth that Job uttered. What He does approve and bountifully reward is Job's conduct, his vindication of suffering as discipline, his victorious negation of Satan's challenge to human nature. Conduct, not talk, was the issue, and God's reproof of Job's "words without wisdom" was only to clear the way for a more unreserved commendation of the words and spiritual growth that merited no reproof.

But God passes at once from a momentary consideration of Job's limitations to a review of the majesty and mystery of nature. Are these chapters (38-41) irrelevant? Only to those who have formed an obdurate preconception of how the book ought to end and refuse to have their preconception modified. Nowhere else in the Bible will you find so detailed a panorama of nature's ways or so eloquent a portrayal of her ministry for men. It is an inspired commentary on the first chapter of *Genesis*. *Genesis* sums up the orderly and sequent emergence of nature at the command of God while these

chapters show the wisdom and greatness of God not in creating but in preserving and sustaining the work of His hand. There is hardly an object of nature or a natural phenomenon of impressive import that is not summoned to the pageant that is made to defile before us. The purpose of it all is very plain. It is to remind Job that in all of his struggle he had missed a source of reassurance on which he might have drawn unfailingly. The very core of Job's affliction had been that he could not see God, could not hear His voice, could not even find His footprints in the lone path along which he was journeying. He had talked much of nature's mysteries, had even recognized in them a certain law and order, but instead of seeing a beneficent God in them he saw only an absentee landlord who disdained to associate with his servants or tenants. His loneliness, his sense of utter isolation from the power that orbed above him or spread its glories around him, is well voiced by Tennyson's outcast, who also felt himself "exiled from eternal God":

A spot of dull stagnation, without light
Or power of movement, seem'd my soul,
'Mid onward-sloping motions infinite
Making for one sure goal.

A still salt pool, lock'd in with bars of sand,
Left on the shore ; that hears all night
The plunging seas draw backward from the
land
Their moon-led waters white.

A star that with the choral starry dance
Join'd not, but stood, and standing saw
The hollow orb of moving Circumstance
Roll'd round by one fix'd law.

Yet all the while nature was calling to them both, was bidding them see not only law but providence and divine comradeship in all her manifestations. There is not a great poet in all literature, so far as I know, who has not found in nature at least a partial antidote to the sense of being left out and left behind from which Job was suffering. Even Byron claims and claims justly the right to stand among those who find in nature what Job did not find :

Some kinder casuists are pleased to say,
In nameless print, that I have no devotion ;
But set those persons down with me to pray,
And you shall see who has the properest
notion
Of getting into heaven the shortest way ;
My altars are the mountains and the ocean,

Earth, air, stars,—all spring from the great
Whole,

Who hath produced, and will receive the soul.

Philosophy, says Henri Bergson, will never become a serious matter till it does away with dogmatic systems and arrives at "the sense of not being alone in the world." The Ancient Mariner lost God when he lost fellowship with nature. He found God when fellowship with nature was restored through love and sympathy.

But it is not only to the comradeship of nature that God calls Job; it is to the mystery of nature, a mystery so vast and encompassing that it offers healing for all minor mysteries. Job could not understand, could not find the mathematical formula for, God's dealings with him. These chapters ask him if he understands or can give the mathematical formula for anything in nature. Job asked for bread and got not a loaf but a bakery; he asked for water and got not a drop but a surf bath; he asked for light and got not a taper but the full glare of the sun. "Study large maps," Lord Salisbury once urged; by demanding more than the section map, they yield more. The larger view is always the more sanative. The pool may rot but not the sea. It's

easier to swim in the ocean and there's less danger of sinking than in the bounded compass of the lake.

The ministry of nature is taught in many passages in the Bible but it is never so massed and summarized as here. Jonah, sulking and whining because he could not understand God's treatment of him, was pointed not to the entire book of nature but to a mere foot-note, a gourd: "Then said the Lord, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not labored, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night. And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?" As Christ found it necessary to reënforce the lesson taught in the preceding sections of Job, that affliction is not penalty, so in the Sermon on the Mount He reënforces the lesson taught in the last section, that a consideration of nature's ways is an antidote to worry and a restorer of faith: "Behold the fowls of the air; for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of

you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin. And yet I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?"

Let us return now to the charge of indecisiveness: "The author of the book had no solution. His Jehovah, who should deliver the conclusion of the whole matter," etc. The critic seems to have reasoned thus: "Solutions ought to come last. But I find no solution in God's speech to Job. Therefore the book ends loosely and indecisively." It hardly needs to be said that the problem is stated and solved before God reappears. In chapters 1-2 Satan wagers that Job will see in suffering a whip; God knows that he will see in it a ladder; in chapters 3-37 Job discerns the ladder and treads painfully but victoriously its ascending rounds. As I pass to the concluding chapters of the book there is no feeling of suspense as in a puzzle yet unsolved. There is eager interest to

know if, when judgment has been pronounced, God will reveal a way by which the sorely tried patriarch might have reached his goal with equal discipline but through less darkness. There is such a way and God reveals it. The "magnificent poetry" of the Lord's address to Job is not meant as a solution of what had already been solved but as a reminder that all who suffer from a sense of God's remoteness and indifference may find in the greatness and harmony of nature the balm of a healing ministry, the assurance that in spite of mystery upon mystery—nay, because of it—

God's in his heaven—
All's right with the world!

If the critic insists on irrelevancy here, he must charge an equal irrelevancy when the Master bade His perplexed and anxious followers to behold the fowls of the air and to consider the lilies of the field.

God, man, nature, these are the themes of *Job*, the greatest themes then and the greatest now. They are presented not as the theologian or the psychologist or the scientist would present them, for the appeal is not to the analytic intellect of man but to his suffering spirit that moves as in a

world not realized, that finds mystery above, mystery within, and mystery round about. The central problem of the book is not, Why do the righteous suffer? but How may all suffering, yours and mine and Job's, be transmuted into the larger life here, and become the pledge and herald of the unending life hereafter?

V

HOSEA

I

"**I** OFTEN fancy," said Rénan, "that I have at the bottom of my heart a city of Is, with its bells calling to prayer a recalcitrant congregation." Is, you remember, is the name of a submerged legendary city near the coast of Brittany, and the tradition is that during the roar of a storm the bells of the sunken city can still be heard. The figure is a fitting symbol not so much of the character of an individual as of the enduring service rendered by the prophets of the Old Testament. In periods of calm their voice is silent, but in every crisis of Hebrew history, whether the danger was from within or without, the prophets sounded the trumpet call to reform and re-dedication. No other people was ever so blessed in leaders of wide horizon, who knew the right and knowing dared maintain. No other leaders ever

spoke in tones that rang clearer or carried farther. These ancient oracles, says J. H. Gardner,¹ have "a rugged grandeur and elevation which set them apart as almost the highest peak in the writings of men."

As interesting as their work is, however, as literature, it is far more interesting in the content of its message. The more I read them the more I am convinced that, in spite of individual differences, one big thought gives unity to them all. Some, it is true, prophesied to the Northern Kingdom, others to the Southern; some were educated, others were almost untutored; some spoke before the long captivity in Babylon, others during it, and still others after it. But though different as the waves they were one as the sea. And in their unity, in their convergence to a central conviction, one finds a better starting point for their study than in the most elaborate summary of their differences.

I know of no single word that expresses this common denominator of the prophets, but an illustration will help. Did you ever see the Kentucky coffee tree? It still grows in the Mississippi Valley but it is threatened with extinction and for a very peculiar

¹ "The Bible as English Literature" (1906), p. 215.

reason. It has a pod like that of the locust tree but the beans inside the pod have a shell so hard that the living germ in each bean finds increasing difficulty in getting out. If the hardening process continues, as seems likely, the Kentucky coffee tree will go the way that all chickens would go if the little ones could not peck their way out.

This hardening of the shell at the expense of the living germ within has played a much wider rôle in human history than in natural history. And the Hebrew prophets, above all men that ever lived, have stood resolutely and unchangingly for the living principle within, and have battled even to the death against every encroachment of shell or husk. Whether the question was religious or social or political, whether it concerned the one or the many, these are the elect men in the Old Testament who championed the cause of truth against the changing forms of truth, who recognized with unerring vision the abiding worth of the inside and the comparative worthlessness of the outside, who in every obligation looked for "the spirit that maketh alive" and fought the menace of "the letter that killeth."

It is a strange twist in human nature that

predisposes it to substitute the means for the end, to exalt the insignia above the thing signified, to flaunt the symbol rather than to practise the thing symbolized. It is the same predisposition to the external that confuses character with reputation, sentiment with sentimentality, the statesman with the politician, the poet with the versifier. When Christ said, "The sabbath was made for man and not man for the sabbath," He summed up incomparably what the prophets had resolutely stood for. When He contrasted the "tithe of mint and anise and cummin" with "judgment, mercy, and faith," He was expanding the same theme. When the President of the United States declared on that memorable second of April, that "the same standards of conduct and responsibility for wrong done shall be observed among nations and their governments that are observed among the individual citizens of civilized states," he spoke in the very tones of the Hebrew prophets. There is, there can be, no surer test of a great thinker than the ability to discern as by intuition between the shell and what the shell was meant to conserve; and there is, there can be, no surer measure of heroism than the courage to take the side of the

inward and spiritual though all the world proclaim that the outward and visible is better.

It is just this blended insight and fearlessness that gave the Hebrew prophets their sovereignty over their own nation and has made all other nations their debtors. Read them again; mark the passages that, rising above the limitations of time and place, suggest how we of a more complex age may resist the encroachments of the outer upon the inner. If you can assimilate from any prophet or from any passage a new insight into the permanency of principle and the transiency of ceremony you will have gained in mental and moral force along the whole battle line of truth and error.

II

You will find no difficulty in selecting from Hosea the great passage that proclaims his stand in the war between the kernel and the shell: "For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings" (6:6). You will search the Old Testament in vain for a clearer or more resonant statement of the problem that seemed always at issue. The national temptation was to stress ritual-

ism at the expense of the life-giving virtues of which ritualism was but the outer form. It is as if the nation had said, "We care not so much for the water that we drink as for the artistry of the cup that contains it." Put thus the error seems very palpable, but there is not one of us who does not need hourly the eloquent reminder of the prophet. There is not one of us who is not functioning below his maximum because he is seeking for strength in externalities that have none. There is not one of us who does not at times suffer from a vague depression because, though regular in our church duties, we are all the time living at the circumference, not at the center. There are writers to-day who pit themselves against the elder masters and ask in all honesty: "Are not my rimes and stanzas as regular as theirs? Are not my stories more artistically constructed?" Yes, but what have you put into them? Your "sacrifice" is patent enough; your "burnt-offerings" smoke from every page. But weigh the masters once more, not in the scales of manner or mannerism but of the urge and sweep of their message. Do not absorb what they say as the sponge absorbs water but as the leaf absorbs the rain. Do for your age

what they did for theirs. Relate your message to a present need as they related theirs to a past need that was then present.

"Mercy and the knowledge of God, these," says Hosea, "are central." Whenever sacrifices cease to quicken the springs of mercy, whenever they do not relate themselves consciously and actively to the heart within, whenever they fail to hint of a God who is merciful and who will in His own time by a supreme sacrifice show His infinite mercy,—they are worse than useless. And whenever burnt-offerings are counted merely by their number, whenever they do not suggest sin purged away, whenever they fail to lead the mind on to the knowledge of a great High Priest who will yet take away the sins of the world,—they become an end in themselves and defeat the end for which they were ordained. But more than this, these great words of Hosea connote not merely the relation between mercy and sacrifice on the one hand and knowledge of God and burnt-offerings on the other. They connote the whole realm of duty that finds expression through any type or form, through any ceremony or symbol.

That I do not overstate the meaning of Hosea's words let me remind you that

Christ on two occasions in His life was reproached by the Pharisees for doing or permitting what they considered unlawful. The questions at issue had nothing to do with sacrifices or burnt-offerings; but in the Master's mind the underlying principle was exactly that which Hosea had stressed, and in both cases He quotes Hosea and urges His critics to seek the larger meaning of the prophet's words. "And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your master with publicans and sinners?" (*Matthew* 9:10-11). Does Jesus explain to them that the question is merely the old one of the outside *versus* the inside, of the shell *versus* the kernel? No, His reply is: "Go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice."

A little later His disciples began to pluck and eat corn on the Sabbath day. "But when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto him, Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the Sabbath day" (*Matthew* 12:2). There would seem at first glance to be little relation between eating

corn and offering sacrifices. Nearly eight centuries had passed and the day of sacrifices and burnt-offerings was drawing to its close. But the relation between form and substance, between letter and spirit, had not changed, nor will it ever change. All this is summed again in Christ's reply: "If ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless." I can imagine no higher tribute to Hosea's words than that Christ should quote them twice and thus standardize them as the most compact statement of the great principle that all the prophets had proclaimed.

III

But every prophet in the Old Testament has his distinctive message apart from the general message of which he is only a co-deliverer. We have spoken of the chorus chanted in varying tones by all the prophets whether major or minor, whether of Israel or Judah. If Hosea's voice had greater carrying power than the others, the refrain itself was the same. Each prophet, however, has a distinguishing note, a spiritual differential, that marks him off from all others. In Hosea's case the differential not

only gives color and form to his entire message but has exerted an influence on Bible thought out of all proportion to the number of pages that contain it. The book itself has but fourteen short chapters, the last eleven prophesying the decline of Israel, the first three narrating the domestic tragedy that made Hosea and his message unique in all literature.

That Hosea is to-day the most neglected and the most obscure of the prophets is due, I think, chiefly to one cause: a curious use of the divine imperative. This is a Hebrew characteristic but it culminates in Hosea. Suppose you had sailed on the ill-fated *Titanic* and, escaping with your life, had realized in later years that the experience had broadened and enriched you, that, like Job, you had come out of the depths to dwell on the heights. You would tell it in the order of its occurrence. You would begin: "I embarked on a ship that I thought unsinkable." Not so Hosea. So clearly would he see in retrospect God's hand in all that had befallen him that he would interpret it and narrate it as the fulfillment of a divine command. He would have begun: "The Lord said to Hosea, Get thee into a ship that shall surely sink." Every detail

which he did not then foresee but which on reflection he found beneficent in result he would have translated not in ordinary past tenses, as you or I would have done, but in the urgent tones of the imperative mood, God Himself commanding.

"Surely there are in every man's life," says Sir Thomas Browne, "certain rubs, doublings, and wrenches, which pass a while under the effects of chance; but at the last, well examined, prove the mere hand of God." Hosea had his full share of "rubs, doublings, and wrenches" but his rooted conviction was that God had planned his life as a whole and preordained every event in accordance with wisdom and mercy. He does not say, therefore, "I did this," but "God commanded me to do this." The goal becomes the starting place. He counts his mile-stones accurately but, as we should say, backward.

Even this would not greatly perplex us provided the things done were not in themselves wrong. But suppose that Jean Valjean, the hero in *Les Misérables*, who certainly passed to moral heroism *via* evil deeds, had said in later years: "The Lord commanded me to steal a loaf of bread, to take the silver plate from the Bishop, to snatch

two francs from a child." We should have thought him a man of strangely inverted moral sense until we were told that this was only his way of saying that, looking back over his life, he believed that a divinity had shaped his ends, rough-hew them how he would. Autobiography thus written becomes a series of divine commands, the author believing that God's permission is in effect an order.

Turn now to the second and third verses of *Hosea*: "The beginning of the word of the Lord by Hosea. And the Lord said to Hosea, Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms: for the land hath committed great whoredom, departing from the Lord. So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim; which conceived and bare him a son." Compare the deterrent nature of this Introduction with the matchless Introductions to *Genesis*, *Esther*, and *Job*. But if translated so as to make clear the thought that Gomer's unfaithfulness came later and was only in retrospect linked with a command of God, the Introduction will take its place with any that have gone before. It not only introduces what is to follow but stamps Hosea as a man whose faith in God's leading made

tragedy in the traditional sense impossible.

Turn also to the second crisis in Hosea's life. Gomer had left him and sold herself as a common wanton. But Hosea's love for her knew no change. He buys her back, restores her to his home, and encompasses her with a love that was powerless to reform her but that transformed him by its very purity and utter negation of self. As he thought it over, the hand of God was again as visible as in the marriage. Both were stages in the discipline of Hosea from which he issued the supreme laureate of love in the Old Testament. When he recounts it, the divine imperative comes again to the fore: "Then said the Lord unto me, Go yet, love a woman beloved of her friend, yet an adulteress, according to the love of the Lord toward the children of Israel, who look to other gods, and love flagons of wine. So I bought her to me for fifteen pieces of silver, and for an homer of barley, and an half homer of barley: And I said unto her, Thou shalt abide for me many days; thou shalt not play the harlot, and thou shalt not be for another man: so will I also be for thee" (3:1-3).

The story is a strange and appealing one,

not because of the faithlessness of a worthless woman but because of the effect on Hosea. Had he put her away, or had she and her betrayer been put to death (*Deuteronomy* 22: 22), all legal requirements would have been fulfilled. But instead of submitting himself to a formal code, Hosea follows the errant Gomer with a love and tenderness so pure, so solicitous, so undeviating that he was lifted to a realization of God's love not vouchsafed to any other prophet in the Old Testament. He had found it hard to understand how God could love an inconstant and unresponsive people. Now he understands it, for he has learned that love is not dependent on reward or return, that it does not measure its outgoing by the prospect of a fixed income, that it has an absolute value of its own, that it emancipates the lover if not the loved,

That it all sordid baseness doth expel,
And the refined mind doth newly fashion
Unto a fairer form, which now doth dwell
In his high thoughts, that would itself excel.

Browning, you remember, makes the dying
St. John say:

For life, with all it yields of joy and woe,
And hope and fear,—believe the aged friend,—

Is just our chance o' the prize of learning love,
How love might be, hath been indeed, and is.

Hosea had learned it but learned it in a way as unexpected by him as was the wreck of his early hope. Edwin Markham has a few lines, the central thought of which might well be ascribed to Hosea:

He drew a circle that shut me out—
Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout;
But Love and I had the wit to win—
We drew a circle that took him in.

But Hosea's circle not only took in the offending Gomer; it compassed the whole range of a new life; its center had ceased to be self and had become in turn another, then love, then God.

I do not believe that literature furnishes a parallel to the *motif* of the book of *Hosea*. "It is characteristic of August Strindberg," says Archibald Henderson,¹ "that, in his effort to portray the most vital, most intense form of conflict, he should instinctively find his dramatic theme in the torturing conflicts of his own family life." But Strindberg uses the conflicts of his family life only as the means of venting an implacable hate.

¹ "European Dramatists" (1913), p. 46.

That a man could be made purer and stronger by the power of a love that was not returned, that was even trampled in the mire, is a *motif* far beyond the ken of Strindberg. In *Crime and Punishment* by Dostoyevsky we have a murderer for the hero and a prostitute for the heroine; but the final regeneration of both is brought about in the traditional way, by love, suffering, and service, shared and ennobled. In the *Scarlet Letter* Hawthorne inhibits all sympathy with the wronged husband by making him the very nemesis of unforgetting and unforgiving malignity. "The Hosea *motif* has interested me also," writes Dr. R. A. Tsanoff,¹ "not as an object of research but as an ethical problem and as a literary idea. I am not aware of any modern Hosea. Is the idea alien to us that it has not been utilized in literary material more often? Do you suppose that man has gone about the business of saving his soul by the direct road? We must be spiritually more selfish than we imagine. 'Whoso would save his own life must save that of another.'"

Men doubtless pointed the finger of scorn at the prophet but the happiest man, the

¹ Author of "The Problem of Life in the Russian Novel" (1917).

freest man, the highest man in Israel was Hosea, the son of Beer, but not because he did not visit legal punishment upon Gomer. Nowhere is it intimated that his treatment of Gomer should become the model for similar cases. By no means. But the man had found himself, had felt the slipping away of narrowness and selfishness, had experienced an emotion so novel and yet so abiding and blessed that he knew that the finite within him had touched the infinite above him. He did not stop to analyze it all; it never occurred to him to seek to justify himself by recourse to the law of the land. No, he hastened to write down not a new method with faithless wives but a new conception of God. "Just as I," he reasoned, "love Gomer in spite of her defection, so does God, though in a vaster way, love Israel in spite of its rebelliousness." And from that moment the new conception of God began to spread throughout Israel and from Israel throughout Judah. Religion became at once and has continued less and less a matter of formal adherence to an imposed code and more and more the power of a full-orbed life that has love of God at its center and glad service as its expression.

A Deity believed is joy begun,
A Deity adored is joy advanced,
A Deity beloved is joy matured.

Major and minor prophets catch the import of the larger vision and chant its beauty and its appeal to an ever widening circle of listeners. When the book of *Deuteronomy* was brought from its long seclusion a century later and men heard once more the words, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might," did not neighbor exchange glances with neighbor and talk again of the message of Hosea? Had not this single prophet of Israel done more to prepare both king and people for the reception of the new message than any prophet who had lived in the long interim? The last chapter of the last book of the Bible returns again to the marriage figure first employed by the first prophet. God is wedded to the Church but the Church has made itself worthy. Hosea does not say, "God is love." That was reserved for him who had seen the Christ and therefore knew. But closest to St. John among the prophets, as St. John was closest to Christ among the disciples, is the figure of Hosea, husband of Gomer.

VI

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

I

“**D**O not regard the Gospels as biographies—they are only sketches.”

This warning or its equivalent one finds prominently posted in nearly every Introduction to the New Testament or Life of Christ or special edition of any one of the four Gospels. The next few years, however, are going to witness a complete reversal of the current view and the Gospels are going to be recognized not only as biographies but as the first biographies known in literature. Stranger still, when the King James translation of the Bible appeared in 1611 the English language had even then no native biography to its credit. The four Gospels were, therefore, the first biographies to be put into English, and not until old Sir Isaac Walton entered the field a generation later was there an English biography that could be even grouped with the four masterpieces that usher in the New Testament.

The pivot on which the whole question turns is the word or rather the concept per-

sonality. "Biography," says Sir Sidney Lee,¹ "aims at satisfying the commemorative instinct by exercise of its power to transmit personality." Samuel Parr, who had intended to write the life of Dr. Samuel Johnson, said of his proposed work: "I had read through three shelves of books to prepare myself for it. It would have contained a view of the literature of Europe. . . . It would have been the third most learned work that has ever appeared." But it would not have been Johnson and would not, therefore, have merited the name of biography. Boswell, whose *Life of Johnson* remains the measure of biographic excellence in all languages, said of his work: "I am absolutely sure that my mode of biography, which gives not only a history of Johnson's visible progress through the world . . . but a *view of his mind* . . . is the most perfect that can be conceived." It is not the number of facts, or the orderly arrangement of them, or the pains taken in securing them, that makes a **work** a biography. There must be the clear recognition of the personality of the man about whom you write, and this recognition must control the choice,

¹ See his "Principles of Biography," and Walter H. Dunn's "English Biography" (1916).

the order, and the significance of the facts presented. If your work does not transmit personality, it may still be informing, but it is not biography. If it does transmit personality, however few the facts and however many the gaps, you have achieved a biography.

Does not each of the four Gospels transmit the personality of Christ? Is not this their central theme? Not one of them attempts to fill in each year or any one year of Christ's life. But the incidents selected are vitally significant; the sayings are steeped in personality; the deeds speak as convergently as the sayings; even the things omitted testify to unity of conception; and the harmony of the whole is itself a sort of miniature biography. It was not the power of Christ that drew His disciples to Him: it was the magnetism of His personality. It was this that held them, and it was this that they tried to body forth in their teachings and writings. Compare the Gospels with any of the countless Lives of the Saints. There is no selective genius in the latter, no sensitiveness to the elements that make for personality; enumeration takes the place of interpretation; gaps are fluently filled with the irrelevant and the non-essen-

tial; eisegesis everywhere usurps the function of exegesis. To my mind nothing speaks more eloquently of the divine personality of Christ than the unwillingness of the Evangelists to obtrude their own comments or to itemize the unrecorded years by additions of their own. The gaps were as evident to them as to us, but the personality that moves through their pages had power to impose silence as well as to compel speech.

II

And yet, though the four Gospels are the first four biographies, though they are one in the common attempt to limn the most marvellous personality that ever appeared among men, John's method marks a distinct advance upon that of his predecessors. Matthew, Mark, and Luke saw the personality of Christ most clearly reflected in the deeds that proclaimed Him the Son of God and in the words that proclaimed Him the supreme teacher of righteousness and salvation. "What did He do?" "What did He say about duty to God and man?"—these questions furnish the clue to the first three Gospels. But the clue to John's Gospel is "Who is He?" This question is far deeper in its reach and wider in its implications

than the other questions. By answering it John's Gospel not only supplements the other Gospels; it underlies them. It is not so much roof as foundation. Tell me who a man is and I can tell you whether his deeds and doctrines are emanations from within or additions from without. Matthew, Mark, and Luke, for example, all record the miracle of Christ's feeding the five thousand. John alone adds that Christ said: "I am the bread of life: He that cometh to me shall not hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst" (6:35). This is not a case of gathering up the fragments that the other Evangelists had left: it is the central and abiding part of the miracle. The actual loaves were but fragments of the creative "I am."

Artists talk of the Raphael touch. It is the addition to a painting, whether in conception or execution, that only Raphael could give. The St. John touch is as clearly marked among the biographers of Christ as the Raphael touch among Renaissance artists. Haunting beauty of phrase, a pervasive suggestiveness as of depth below depth in the thought, perfect unity in texture and pattern, wide horizons beckoning always, the divine so clearly envisaged that

it seems the human and the human so irradiated that it seems the divine—these are evident at even a first reading. But beneath these, giving wholeness and symmetry to every part, is the quest for that central font in Christ which we, veiling our ignorance, call personality. Only the first stages of this quest had been attained by Matthew, Mark, and Luke. It was left for John to recall and record those sayings of our Lord in which "I am," surpassing in content both miracle and parable, proved at last the most revealing miracle and the most illuminating parable.

Try to think what a blank there would be in the world's knowledge of Christ and in its fellowship with Him if we did not know that He said:

"I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever" (6:51).

"I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (8:12).

"I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved" (10:9).

"I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep" (10:11).

"I am the resurrection and the life: he

that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live" (11:25).

"I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (14:6).

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman" (15:1).

"I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit" (15:5).

Note, too, that if Christ does not say "I am love" in so many words, He says it in passages of which "I am love" is only the crystallization. "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another" (13:34). It was not a new commandment that they should love one another, but it was new that they should love one another as He had loved them, He who, being life and light, was necessarily love. When John says, therefore, in his First Epistle, "God is love" (4:8), he is but interpreting and summarizing the passages about love that he was later to record in his Gospel.

It is these great "I am" passages and the passages that radiate from them that give distinctive character and appeal to John's

Gospel. Not one of these passages is found in Matthew, Mark, or Luke. Matthew at least must have heard Christ when He uttered these words but Matthew's ear was not as finely attuned to spiritual undertones as John's. The best loved disciple, had he written as early as Matthew or Mark or Luke, might have supplemented their records merely with more miracles and more parables. As the years passed, however, reflection taught him new values. Autobiography is a kind of biography, but it comes later. John's Gospel is in a sense autobiography succeeding biography. But, if the distinction may be made, it is a new kind of autobiography, Christ revealing Himself not merely in His own words, but in those words that connote inner being rather than outer action. The verb *to be* takes precedence of the verb *to do*. To note and record this kind of self-revelation demands a sensitiveness to the meaning of *personalia*, a delicacy of spiritual interpretation, a balance between observation and reaction to observation, a faculty of reconstructive thinking, a passion for ultimate rather than mediate things that only a few have had and not one in equal measure with St. John.

III

It is often said that St. John's Gospel shows the evidence of Jewish Alexandrian philosophy, that it was written to offset certain speculative tendencies that had become current since the appearance of the first Gospels. The argument seems to me greatly overworked. The speculative philosophy of his day may have tinged St. John's vocabulary here and there but there is no need to invoke its aid further. The central current of the Fourth Gospel finds its channel not in outside influences but in the character of St. John, in the limitations of the Gospels already written, and in the crisis through which Christianity was passing when only one of the elect twelve was left to testify of his Master. Let us note these briefly in order.

Though we know little of St. John's life outside of his writings, the character of the man is self-portrayed in his Gospel, his three Epistles, and the Book of *Revelation*. In bulk Luke contributed more to the New Testament than any one else, but in variety John stands easily first. Luke excels in pure narration, in the clear and orderly sequence of events, the single event being with him the narrative unit. But in causal

connection, in atmosphere, in absolute harmony of tone, in mastery of all forms of expression that hint more than they say and quicken to their full capacity all types of receptive intelligence, John has no equal. His unit is never the bare event, never the mere deed. In his Gospel the unit is the heart-beat of personality; in his Epistles it is the note of fellowship with the Father, from which the deed springs as flower from seed; in the *Apocalypse* it is the symbol that foreshadows the event. The event flashes and is gone; the matrix from which it arose abides. A man who felt as John felt, who saw life from his angle, who was privileged to be the intimate of Christ, who was known preëminently as the disciple whom Jesus loved, and who was commissioned by Jesus from the cross to be son to Mary in His stead, would not need to have his Gospel shaped by current philosophies. It sprang from a character naturally malleable to spiritual pressures. It was the reaction of an intense personality to the personality of One who combined in Himself every height that John had glimpsed in experience or vision.

But the limitations of Matthew, Mark, and Luke called for a Fourth Gospel as in-

sistently¹ as did the native bent of John's character. What they recorded they recorded in a form and spirit beyond the censure of even hostile criticism. What was beyond their ken, what did not seem to them central and organic in the Master's life, they omitted. They never for a moment doubted that He was the Son of God and the promised Messiah. Matthew's Gospel is indeed a sort of Panama Canal between the Old Testament and the New. The supreme revelation of Christ's personality was in Matthew's mind that He was the long-looked-for Messiah, that in Him the tides of both dispensations met. Matthew was eager to record every event in Christ's life to which could be added, "That it might be fulfilled." Mark cared less for fulfillment and more for the achievements that heralded Christ as the Son of God. Luke's Gospel is the synthesis of the two, it being as he tells us a "treatise of all that Jesus began both to do and to teach" (*Acts* 1:1).

But men were constantly asking a question which these Gospels did not adequately answer. "Suppose He is the Messiah and the Son of God. This is only His office, His relationship. Tell us not *what* He is but

who He is." This demand recurs again and again in the first three Gospels. "Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others Jeremias, or one of the prophets" (*Matthew* 16:14). "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary?" (*Mark* 6:3). "Is not this Joseph's son?" (*Luke* 4:22). This question must have gathered momentum as the Gospel was preached in distant lands; it must have deepened in meaning in proportion to the range of thought of those that asked it. To say that Christ was the Messiah or the Son of God or, as He called Himself, the Son of Man, was not in itself to link Him with universal human need, to bring Him home to men's business and bosoms, to make Him the comrade of all the ages. Another answer was needed, an answer less cryptic, and more soluble in the daily wants of ordinary humanity. Christ had Himself given the answer in many self-revealing discourses but these had found no place in the Gospels already extant. Life, light, love, truth, the door, the way, the living bread,—the identification of Christ with these recurrent and elemental needs was to prove not merely a vaster interpretation but almost a rediscovery of the Saviour of men.

In addition, however, to the character of

St. John and to the *lacunae* in the Gospels that preceded his, there is another consideration that cannot be omitted in any survey of the *hinterland* from which issued the Fourth Gospel. Put yourself in the place of the Evangelist. His fellow disciples were dead and he alone survived of those who had journeyed with Christ, conversed with Him, and seen with their own eyes the mastery that He exercised over nature, disease, and death. John could still convince the doubters by saying, "I knew Him, I heard Him, I saw Him heal the sick and raise the dead." The argument from personal contact and personal observation must have had the same force then as now. Human nature at bottom has not changed. But John lived on into an age in which the thought must have come to him with increasing force: "How will it be when I am gone? When none is left to say 'I saw'?" This crisis in the history of Christianity John seems to me to have provisioned far more vividly than any of his predecessors. It was a crisis which Christ had not only foreseen but provided for in discourses which John alone was to record. Those long centuries that were to heap themselves upon the short years of Christ's ministry,

the new nations and languages and civilizations that were to thrust themselves between, the vast abyss of time across which men must look and listen to see the face and to hear the voice of the Son of Man, the cry that would go up so often from waiting hearts, "Could I but see Him and touch the hem of His garment"—this was a burden which Christ bore in advance, a chasm which He bridged so that all succeeding generations might pass securely over.

But the story of the miracles wrought in the olden time would not alone avail for these waiting centuries and St. John deals more sparingly in miracles than any other Evangelist. The miracle after all is only a sort of first aid to the unbelieving. "Blessed are they," says Jesus, "that have not seen, and yet have believed" (20:29). Nor would additional parables have met the need. The parable is the unapproached model of much in little but it shows Christ as the matchless teacher rather than as the companion whose personality will enrich all personalities that come within its orbit. What these waiting centuries wanted was not new evidence that Christ had lived and had taught but that He was still living and still teaching. The emphasis must now be

put on those qualities of Christ's personality which each man, in whatever century he lived, could test for himself, could apply to his own spirit needs, could instantly vindicate in his own experience. Men do not argue about bread: they taste it.

John's faith was no longer dependent on the miracles and wonders that he had seen Christ do. These were but scaffolding; their support was no longer needed. John calls them signs, never miracles,—signs of a continuing presence behind them that infinitely transcended in faith value any one of them or all of them. External evidence, the evidence of John's eye and ear, had found internal warrant, the warrant of an answering life. And this new stage in the Apostle's faith forecast accurately the whole future appeal of Christianity. The time had come when the nature of the evidence for the living Christ must be changed. Those who are to hand the torch down the ages must have more to say than, "Believe on Him because of the wonderful works which we can prove that He did, and the wonderful doctrines which we can prove that He taught." They must know those self-evidencing qualities, those self-vindicating virtues, those self-validating forces which

stream from the personality of Christ and which defy alike the corrosion of time that has been and the menace of time yet to be. They must say, "Christ is not a past history: He is an abiding life, not to be reasoned about but to be lived. Appropriation, not argumentation, is the key-word." This is how John's Gospel met the crisis of the coming centuries.

IV

Among the radiant words about which the Evangelist's thought loves to circle, is it possible to select one that may rightly be said to sound the keynote of the Fourth Gospel? I think so. That word is life. Light, love, truth, and all the rest are but branches of this vine, though, like the branches of the banyan tree, they may dip down and become the roots of the new life themselves. But

'Tis life, whereof our nerves are scant,
Oh life, not death, for which we pant.

This Gospel says and suggests more of life, of its potential beauty and power, of its height and depth, of its reach and range and possibility, of its beginning and growth and

culmination in Christ, than is said or suggested in all the rest of the New Testament combined.

It is life with which it starts. Mark had begun his Gospel with the baptism of Christ; Luke with the annunciation to Mary; Matthew with "Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." But John begins by saying there is no such thing as B. C. The life of Christ had no beginning. All is A. D. And he closes his Gospel on the same infinite note. If all the activities of this life, even during its ministry of a paltry three years, should be recorded, "I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written." This is not exaggeration. It is merely a human attempt to express the infinite, to bind in the radiations of a life that had no beginning and can have no end.

It is life restored in whole or in part that forms the theme of every miracle recorded by John, every miracle, that is, that has to do with men. "Thy son liveth," cry the servants to the anxious nobleman. "So the father knew that it was at the same hour, in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth" (4:53). The impotent man at the pool of Bethesda had waited thirty-eight

years for some one to put him into the healing spring. "Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. And immediately the man was made whole" (5:8-9). To another He said, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (9:7), and the poor fragment of life washed and was made whole. Before the resurrection of Lazarus were the words: "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live" (11:25). This, rather than "Lazarus, come forth," was the divine imperative to which death gave heed. And the raising of Lazarus was but itself a gesture of infinite personality, a mere incident in the dateless sovereignty of the Lord both of life and of death.

Finally, it is life that in John's own words gives the central purpose and import of his Gospel. The ministry of this Gospel thus confirms and encompasses the ministries of the three Gospels that precede it; but John adds as its ultimate ministry that the life of One might flow through the sluice-gate of faith into the life of all. "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God;

and that believing ye might have life through his name " (20:30-31).

V

The older commentators used to make much of symbols in their interpretation of the Gospels. Matthew was represented by a man, Mark by a lion, Luke by an ox, and John by an eagle. As the eagle, scorning the earth, loves to soar into the mysterious blue, and to roam through skyey spaces measureless to man, so John, it was thought, loves to poise at dizzy heights, and to sweep through realms impenetrable to eye or mind. But the figure is not apt. No, not the eagle is the fitting symbol of the Fourth Gospel. If we are to find our symbol among the inhabitants of those argent spaces between earth and sky, let us choose one that shall suggest neither aloofness nor solitariness. Let it be one that seeks the upper levels of air, seeks them daily, but only that it may return and bring the rapture of the heights into the humbler life of the plain. Not the eagle shall be our symbol but the skylark,

Type of the wise who soar, but never roam;
True to the kindred points of Heaven and
Home.

VII

THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS

I

THE best way to know a great writer is to approach him *via* his favorite theme or themes. If I were going to lecture on Matthew Arnold and had at my disposal only two lecture periods I should in the first hour say nothing about Arnold himself but devote the time wholly to the question of culture. If Carlyle were the subject the approach would be by way of shams. Tennyson and Browning would be prefaced by a discussion of the two kinds of progress: first, the slow, uniform, incremental kind that a ball makes when it moves in a leisurely way over a level floor; second, the irregular and intermittent kind that a tumbling box makes as it is kicked from one point to another; Tennyson stands for the first, Browning for the second. In the case of Emerson, self-reliance would be the keynote. O. Henry would require a

talk about the man down and out, his desire to get back, his unwillingness to be permanently classed as bad or useless. Woodrow Wilson would compel us first of all to front the question whether we had not heard too much about the rights of democracy and too little about its duties.

To know St. Paul you must think as you have never thought before about the limitations of law. This is the theme that he made peculiarly his own and by making it his own made it also a part of the thought of nineteen centuries. No one can read the *Epistle to the Romans* or the *Epistle to the Galatians* without seeing at once that the great Apostle's mind had been revolving about this problem long before he made his journey to Damascus. From that journey he returned a Christian but his growing consciousness of the limitations of law not only predisposed him to accept Christ instantly but gave to his acceptance an intellectual authoritativeness impossible before.

Of course by law Paul does not mean what we to-day mean by natural law. The law of gravitation, the laws of heat, of sound, of light did not enter into the Apostle's thinking. No one can speak of the limitations of these laws because they are not

limited. They are coextensive with the sovereignty of nature: or, if they have their limitations, God alone knows it, not we. It was chiefly of natural law that Hooker was thinking when he wrote the famous words:¹ "Of law there can be no less acknowledged than that her seat is the bosom of God, her voice the harmony of the world; all things in heaven and earth do her homage, the very least as feeling her care, and the greatest as not exempted from her power." These words suggest St. John rather than St. Paul.

Fortunately we are not left in doubt as to the kind of law that St. Paul had in mind. "I am verily a man," he said in his defense at Jerusalem, "which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers" (*Acts* 22:3). You will find "the law of the fathers" summarized in the twentieth, twenty-first, twenty-second, and twenty-third chapters of *Exodus*. If these chapters contain a few laws or "judgments" that hardly seem to us worth the effort of St. Paul to invalidate, let us remember that they contain also the Ten Command-

¹"Ecclesiastical Polity," Book I, Chapter 16.

ments,—laws that have guided and shaped the destiny of civilization in all lands. It is no man of straw, then, that the Apostle sets up. He is concerned with the very concept of law itself, and what he says applies to Gentile as well as to Jew, to modern society as well as to ancient. Moses is no more truly the lawgiver of the old dispensation than Paul is the law interpreter of the new.

II

The theme of *Romans* is usually said to be justification by faith. But this is far too narrow a view. It puts the emphasis, moreover, on the wrong word. Faith is the great word; justification is one and only one of its fruits. If you view the book otherwise its center will not be in the middle. Paul nowhere defines faith.¹ He illustrates it, illuminates it, contrasts it with law and works, lets us feel the glow of it, but nowhere tries to circumscribe it with a definition. There's danger in definitions, danger that we pigeonhole the thing defined in-

¹ I need hardly say that I do not consider Hebrews the work of Paul. But, even so, the words, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11: 1), are not a definition and were not so intended.

stead of practicing it. Whatever faith may be in its last analysis, if it remain only a creed with us, it is not faith in the Pauline sense. It must be a habit of mind, the very air that we breathe, if we are to rise to the height of the Apostle's argument. We may have moments of doubt—as we gasp at times for breath—but the sense of emptiness and loss that these moments bring is but added evidence that faith is native to our nature.

Do you remember that fine thought in William James's essay, *Is Life Worth Living?* "That our whole physical life may lie soaking in a spiritual atmosphere, a dimension of Being that we at present have no organ for apprehending, is vividly suggested to us by the analogy of the life of our domestic animals. Our dogs, for example, are *in* our human life but not *of* it. They witness hourly the outward body of events whose inner meaning cannot, by any possible operation, be revealed to their intelligence, events in which they themselves often play the cardinal part. My terrier bites a teasing boy, for example, and the father demands damages. The dog may be present at every step of the negotiations, and see the money paid without an inkling of what it all means,

without a suspicion that it has anything to do with *him*. And he never *can* know in his natural dog's life. Or take another case which used greatly to impress me in my medical-student days. Consider a poor dog whom they are vivisectioning in the laboratory. He lies strapped on a board and shrieking at his executioners, and to his own dark consciousness is literally in a sort of hell. He cannot see a single redeeming ray in the whole business; and yet all these diabolical-seeming events are usually controlled by human intentions with which, if his poor, benighted mind could only be made to catch a glimpse of them, all that is heroic in him would religiously acquiesce. Healing truth, relief to future sufferings of beast and man are to be bought by them. It is genuinely a process of redemption. Lying on his back on the board there he is performing a function incalculably higher than any prosperous canine life admits of; and yet, of the whole performance, this function is the one portion that must remain absolutely beyond his ken."

"In the dog's life," adds Professor James, "we see the world invisible to him because we live in both worlds. In human life, although we only *see* our world, and his

within it, yet encompassing both these worlds a still wider world may be there as unseen by us as our world is by him; and to believe in that world may be the most essential function that our lives in this world have to perform." But the analogy of the mole seems to me even more suggestive. Does he know that above his sunless galleries there is a world of avenued beauty to which his dim pathways are but as acorn to oak? All that he could say would be: "I live in darkness and am thwarted in my efforts to build and to move by great, wide-spreading roots. These tend upward. Whether they issue in beauty and symmetry and service above, I do not know and can never know. But they point upward, always upward." Is not that a sort of replica of our life? We, too, live in darkness but in every hard buffeting we seem to touch things that point upward, always upward. There is a surface beyond which we cannot pass. But faith and hope and love, our ministrants of widest vision, say: "There is, there must be something completer beyond. All here is beginning and fragment. Beyond the veil we catch glimpses of the end which the beginning implies, gleams of the whole which the fragment proclaims."

III

But if Paul does not define faith he expounds it. "Ye shall know them by their fruits," said Christ, of the false prophets. And of faith Paul seems to say: "Ye shall know it, too, by its fruits." The first fruit was freedom from the bondage of law. The law remained but it no longer chafed. Paul willed what it willed. To its "Thou shalt not" he could now reply "I don't want to." He had at last found in law not repression but expression. From the servitude of a slave hearkening to the command of his master, he had passed to the freedom of a son hearing the voice of his father. Paul does not often repeat himself but this new sense of filial freedom could not be dismissed in a single passage. In *Galatians* (4:4-7) he had written: "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." In *Romans* (8:14-17) the same

thought is touched with new beauty: "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together."

The weakness of the law was that it weighed, but did not increase weight. It was a mirror but not a magnet. It graded the pupil but did not train him. A story will illustrate: A colored man of the old school had been sent by his employer to a hospital to recover from fever. The experience was new to him but he was grateful for every attention shown him and ascribed good intentions even where he could see no appreciable results. "Do they give you enough to eat, Uncle Ned?" asked his employer, who called daily to inquire about the patient's progress. "Not much, suh," was the reply. "But I ain't complainin'. Dey gives me a piece o' glass to suck three times a day. I don't seem to git much satisfaction out'n it but de doctor say I'm gittin'

better." Paul had made the same mistake. He had tried to find spiritual nourishment in the law, whereas the law is more a thermometer than a diet. It records mercilessly our alternations of moral sickness and health but it does not drive out sickness and substitute health. The *Epistle to the Romans* is the protest of a man who had been holding a thermometer in his mouth and thinking it was food. Had the mistake been peculiar to St. Paul, the protest would have availed little. But it was not peculiar to him. The nation, the age, the legal experts themselves, those who obeyed and those who disobeyed the law were suffering from the same confusion of ideas. Not only so but the tendency to the same kind of inversion can be traced wherever laws are promulgated. Why is the tendency less to-day than then? Because the *Epistle to the Romans* was written and written by Paul, trained in "the law of the fathers" but emancipated by Christ.

Emerson touches on the principle at issue in his lines about the chickadee. How could this scrap of a bird defy the winter cold while Emerson shivered in coat and overcoat? The bird sings the answer:

And polar frost my frame defied,
Made of the air that blows outside.

Neither man nor bird nor beast can be chilled if the body be made of the air that surrounds it. To suffer from cold is but to proclaim a steep difference between the temperature within and the temperature without. Make the temperatures the same, normalize them by the same standard, let the body that suffers and the air that imposes the suffering be parts of one structural whole, and you are equally protected from polar cold and tropic heat. The donning or doffing of clothes may mitigate the sense of discomfort; it cannot expel it. When the spirit of the law becomes the spirit of him who strives to obey it, when "God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts," freedom has been won. Emerson learned the physical principle one snow-laden afternoon "as I waded through the woods to my grove." Paul learned the spiritual principle as he journeyed to Damascus.

But with freedom from the bondage of law faith bestowed also a sense of instant acquittal. However fair his record had been as a keeper of the law, Paul had drawn a lengthening chain of self-condemnation. He could not perfectly obey, but to fail by a hairbreadth was to feel the full weight of the law's violation. Nor was there any

escape. The law would not bend. Obedience heaped upon obedience left him still conscious of a chasm that spelled guilt. And not only he but all had sinned. "All," said Arnold, "is in some sense the governing word of the *Epistle to the Romans*." It is the governing word only of that part of the Epistle that affirms the universality of conscious sin and the corresponding universality of the forgiveness that faith imparts. "What then? Are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are *all* under sin. As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one. There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are *all* gone out of the way" (3:9-12). "For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over *all* is rich unto *all* that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (10:12-13).

Gladstone deplored what he thought was a waning sense of sin in modern life. I cannot help doubting whether the sense of sin is actually lessening. It is receding; it is passing lower beneath the surface; it is diving, I think, rather than diminishing.

Every great crisis brings it to the front. "Lest we forget" was the only note struck at the great Jubilee that found instant and universal response; it is the only note that still echoes from the diapason of national acclaim that closed the triumphs of sixty years:

For heathen heart that puts her trust
In reeking tube and iron shard,
All valiant dust that builds on dust,
And guarding, calls not Thee to guard,
For frantic boast and foolish word—
Thy Mercy on Thy People, Lord!

The World War has just drawn to an end and right has triumphed gloriously. No one can read the thrilling tidings that pour in from the Allied Nations without being profoundly moved by the absence of "frantic boast and foolish word." No, when deep calleth unto deep, whether in joy or sorrow, the Apostle's appeal is vindicated. There is in man a latent sense of guilt before his Maker. Does not every great preacher, whether Protestant, Jew, or Catholic, presuppose it? Does he not strike for it and find it? Is not every wide-reaching revival built upon it? Does not every national crisis lay it bare?

When Paul speaks, therefore, of justification he is not appealing to a consciousness of guilt felt only by the Jew, trained in a system and ceremonial designed to keep alive a racial sensitiveness to wrong-doing. He is appealing to a consciousness co-extensive with humanity. When he exalts faith as the solvent of the sense of guilt, he is not merely outlining a central doctrine of the New Testament, nor is he recording merely a personal experience. He is epitomizing the whole history of Christianity. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (5: 1-2).

"And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us" (5: 3-5). I have separated this glowing passage into two parts because each part proclaims a separate victory of faith. Verses 1-2 are the final summary of faith as instant acquittal;

verses 3-5 pass from justification to sanctification, from instant acquittal to increasing attainment. The one offers pardon, the other progress; the one is the gift of grace, the other the promise of growth; the one says, "You are free from," the other, "You are free to;" the one assures the remission of sin, the other the remoulding of the sinner. Christ had become the pinnacle of the Apostle's effort. Instead of adding painfully year by year this law and that law to the number that he might fairly be said to have obeyed, he finds himself counting his spiritual progress not by increasing obedience to law but by increasing identification with Christ. For addition from without there was substituted growth from within. The journey to Damascus not only rescued Paul from drowning; it taught him how to swim.

A man may be saved without sanctification. The thief on the Cross was justified into Paradise but he was barred by death from the continuing process that we call sanctification. Where there is life, however, there will be sanctification if justification has preceded. Justification removes the weight and gives play to the spiritual forces that are already pushing upward.

The great passage in which Paul combines the functions of the two shows how closely they were related in his own experience. The history of Christianity has only confirmed this relationship. "And not only so" remains now as then the brief reach from the one to the other.

Coleridge, who called *Romans* "the profoundest work in existence," seems to me to have illustrated the twin processes of justification and sanctification in his *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. The mariner had committed a wanton sin in killing the innocent albatross. As a symbol of his guilt the dead bird is hung about his neck. When salvation comes

The albatross fell off, and sank
Like lead into the sea.

That was justification. "Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea" (*Micah* 7:19). Now comes the new life with its steady climb to the new ideal. Love is to be its pilot, prayer its staff:

Farewell, farewell! but this I tell
To thee, thou Wedding-Guest!
He prayeth well, who loveth well
Both man and bird and beast.

He prayeth best, who loveth best
All things both great and small ;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all.

That is sanctification.

IV

Faith as seen in its three fruits, emancipation, justification, sanctification,—this is the theme of the *Epistle to the Romans*. The picture is sketched against the background of the Mosaic law, and the colors are drawn from the Apostle's own vivid and transforming experience. Had there been no journey to Damascus, there would have been no *Epistle to the Romans*. Luke narrates the journey as history (*Acts* 9:1-31), but to Paul it was autobiography. The outer facts are the units in Luke's story; the inner transformations are the stages in Paul's survey. Faith is a rare word in the Old Testament. It is found in *Romans* more often than in the Old Testament and the four Gospels combined. But though the word is rare before the coming of Christ, the thing itself is wrought into the inmost texture of God's dealings with man. The first soul that found its way to God found it by faith, and the last will find it where the

first found it. But it is to Paul that we owe the new vision. It was he that made clear to human intelligence the oneness of outlook that links Abraham not only with the spiritual heroes of the New Testament but with your neighbor or mine who on yesterday or to-day passed with a smile from home or battle-field into the presence of his God. The *Epistle to the Romans* has made the road to Damascus the highway of Christendom.

VIII

THE EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS

I

THIS brief letter stands in a class by itself. Paul's other letters to churches are doctrinal; this is personal. If the *Epistle to the Romans* is the expression of Paul's intellect at its highest reach, the *Epistle to the Philippians* is the expression of his temperament at its normal level. It is the overflow of the Apostle's heart to the first church that he founded in Europe. There is no censure; there is only praise for their steadfastness and gratitude for their generosity. No dominant theme compels the thought, for the Apostle's mood is reflective, not argumentative. This letter is Paul in study robe and slippers.

It is also by common consent among the last letters that Paul wrote. Death fronts him or rather he fronts death. The prison walls are about him but, though they shut in his

body, they seem only a challenge to his spirit. His mind passes in review the incidents of other days, the happy associations that bind him to his fellow-workers, and the seeming misfortunes that have all "fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the Gospel." Most interesting of all, however, and most revealing, are the tested truths which he is not now planting but harvesting. Like Emerson's *Terminus*, Longfellow's *Morituri Salutamus*, Browning's *Epilogue to Asolando*, and Tennyson's *Crossing the Bar*, this is Paul's valedictory, his swan song. It is not formal and studied, its message seeming to be overheard rather than heard. He is reviewing and reappraising in quietness and serenity what before he advocated or defended with Pauline ardor and intensity.

Remember that this is the first time in the history of the new faith that a follower of the crucified Christ is permitted to view the approach of death at close quarters and to report calmly on the result. The first martyr had said (*Acts* 7:56): "Behold, I see the heavens opened and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God," and Paul had doubtless heard him. But Stephen's words are more a hail to the life beyond

than a farewell to this. If the last hours of other New Testament martyrs had been recorded for us, I do not doubt that we should have had other testimonies to group with the *Epistle to the Philippians*. But Paul's farewell alone remains, and this gives to *Philippians* a kind of significance not shared by any other book of the New Testament.

The words of men as they face into the unknown have always been invested with a peculiar authoritativeness. For my own part the assertions of innocence that condemned men so often make just before the end weigh more in my final estimate than the most detailed arguments of the prosecution. Shakespeare makes the dying John of Gaunt give the reason:

O, but they say the tongues of dying men
Enforce attention like deep harmony.
Where words are scarce, they're seldom spent
in vain,
For they breathe truth that breathe their
words in pain.
He that no more must say is listen'd more
Than they whom youth and ease have taught
to glose.
More are men's ends mark'd than their lives
before.

Poe in *Tamerlane* adds a further reason:

Father, I firmly do believe—
 I *know*—for Death who comes for me
 From regions of the blest afar,
 Where there is nothing to deceive,
 Hath left his iron gate ajar,
 And rays of truth you cannot see
 Are flashing through Eternity.

Montaigne believed that the only way to judge a man's life was to review it from death backward: "Wherefore at this last action all the other actions of our life ought to be tried and sifted. 'Tis the masterday; 'tis the day that is judge of all the rest; 'tis the day that ought to be judge of all my foregoing years. . . . In the judgment I make of another man's life, I always observe how he carried himself at his death."¹

II

We are not left in doubt as to how Paul "carried himself." Though we do not see him at the last moment we hear him say just before the shadow falls: "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labor: yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire

¹ See the essay entitled "That Men are not to Judge of our Happiness till after Death."

to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better. Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you" (1:21-24). Hamlet was also "in a strait betwixt two" but the question is settled in favor of life, not that "to abide in the flesh is more needful" for any one else,

But that the dread of something after death,
The undiscover'd country from whose bourn
No traveller returns, puzzles the will
And makes us rather bear those ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of.
Thus conscience does make cowards of us all.

No, conscience does not make cowards of us all. Death had been faced bravely, even fearlessly, before the coming of Christ. In pagan lands men and women have risen superior to it, have even dared it. But these were rare souls. All honor to them! Christianity did not inaugurate fearlessness of death but it made common stock of it where before it was preferred stock. It enabled your obscure neighbor and mine to die with all the calmness of Socrates and Marcus Aurelius and with twice the confidence that all is well. It robbed death of its tyranny of the vague. Death became only going home. The ship was not ven-

turing into an unknown sea; it was only anchoring in its destined harbor.

Death is not now viewed as the terrible but inevitable engulfment of life. It is a consummation innate in the larger view of life. If life is probation, as the first book of the Bible proclaims, if it is the race-track of the developing spirit, death is coronation and goal. The lines of life do not dip down to death; they converge upward to it. Christianity has changed our attitude to death because it has changed our conception of life. Even where there is no open or acknowledged faith in Christ, Christianity has so diffused the larger view of life and so enthroned the thought of an all-embracing mercy that death has ceased to be but another name for gruesome terror. But, whether recognized or not, it is Christ that took the sting from death and the victory from the grave. His revelation of life made death a portal instead of a portent. Paul sums up the twin thought when he says: "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." The Christ life not only dissolves the fear of death; it crystallizes it into the certainty of something better.

But Paul's thoughts are not all nor even chiefly of death. The life that abolishes the

fear of death is always primal in his thinking. Every epistle that he wrote traverses somewhere the larger thought of life. But I wish to consider now a quality in Paul's writings which seems to have been overlooked by his biographers but which is as truly autobiographic as any event or doctrine associated with his name. I mean his equal mastery of what we loosely call prose and poetry. More accurately it is the combination in his personality of two powers, each the beneficiary of the other. Paul is usually thought of as a great logician, one whose mind played quickly over wide areas of truth, found unity in apparent diversity, and summarized the results in terms of cubic measure rather than in those of linear or square measure. So he was; but if one lobe of his brain was logic the other was song. He can take a word like charity and literally sing its content into the consciousness of the world. If the thirteenth chapter of 1 *Corinthians* alone remained to us of his writings, I should have said that at his death the greatest lyric poet of his day passed from among men. There is no hidden recess of charity that is not sung out into the light as by one to whom prose was an awkward tool and poetry the

native utterance. His singing robes are on him again as he chants the separate glories of bodies celestial and bodies terrestrial (1 *Corinthians* 15:40-57).

But every passage that lingers in the memory for the poetic beauty of its content or robing might be expunged, and Paul's mastery of thought and expression could be solidly established on the basis of his rigid reasoning and penetrating analysis. His normal gait indeed is prose, not poetry. The difference, it seems to me, is due to a difference of direction. In his most closely knit prose he moves downward, from the greater to the less; in the passages that bespeak the poet he moves upward, from the less to the greater. Read again the birth chant of Christian charity; note the pinnacle ending: "And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity" (1 *Corinthians* 13:13). Listen again to the solemn music of the passage beginning: "There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another" (1 *Corinthians* 15:40); note how the thought and the music burgeon out together in the final pæan of victory: "O death, where is thy sting? O

grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Read now the warrior passage in *Ephesians* (6:13-17). This is not poetry but it is masterly prose. It begins with "the whole armor of God" and ends with "the sword of the Spirit." It passes downward from an armory to a single piece of armor. Had Paul begun with "the sword of the Spirit" and moved upward and outward to "the whole armor of God," his phrasing would have been different. The same weapons and the same functions might have been mentioned but the characterizations would have been cumulative in beauty and vividness, for his poetic manner would have replaced his prose manner.

Nowhere are the two movements more clearly illustrated than in *Philippians* 2:5-11: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto

death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Between Christ "in the form of God" to Christ suffering "the death of the cross" there is compressed in logical and well ordered prose the entire teaching of the New Testament. It is a biography of Christ compressed into a sentence, and into the biography is woven the central teaching of Christ's life. The movement is downward, and the thinker in Paul predominates. But at "Wherefore" the movement is upward from Christ on the Cross to Christ on the throne of the universe, and the seer in Paul speaks.

Browning, too, was thinker and seer. But in later years the prose manner of the thinker so invaded the vision of the seer that nearly one-half of his work, that written after 1870, added little if anything to his reputation. But *Philippians* shows that Paul retained his dualism of endowment to the end. The passage quoted not only summarizes the Christ that was and the Christ

that is to be; it conjoins also the two Pauls. To know this man you must not only enter the doorways of his intellect; you must look through the windows of his spirit. No biography of him is worth while that neglects to indicate this double endowment or fails to trace the deepened inflow and outflow of truth that resulted therefrom.

But *Philippians* shows still another angle from which to view the personality of its author. Consider for a moment the vast significance of these words: "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (3:13-14). That passage seems to me to give vitality and boundlessness to every doctrine that Paul has championed. Had he reported differently, had he counted himself as having apprehended, I for one should have felt that power had gone forever from every page of his writings. The man who feels that he has caught up with his ideal compels me to believe that his ideal was a very poor sort of thing after all. I thought it was a ladder with its summit in the skies. But he proves

that it was only a rocking-chair. Passage after passage of St. Paul would have to be reinterpreted and put on a lower plane of appeal if he had proclaimed himself as sitting astride the goal. Writings that I had thought belonged to the literature of power would now have to be classed as belonging only to the literature of knowledge; appeals that seemed to release limitless energy of pursuit would have their push and urge taken out of them; tracts of effort where the "no fence law" seemed to hold would now be revealed as divided and hemmed in; waters that I thought had the tang and challenge of the ocean would now smack of the bounded lake or stagnant pool.

Paul must have known that his confession might be used against him. I have no doubt that it was. The finished and finite clods of his day, the legalists whom he had fought on this very issue, must have read in his words a confession of defeat for himself and of weakness for the system that he represented. But his frank admission needs no defense now. Sir Joshua Reynolds defined his own ideal thus: "The sight never beheld it, nor has the hand expressed it; it is an idea residing in the breast of the artist which he is always laboring to impart and

which he dies at last without imparting." If this is true of the artist it is doubly true of the man who is attempting to mould character. Christianity is built on an unattainable ideal. When Paul said, "I count not myself to have apprehended," he did more than prove his own greatness of soul; he touched with a certain endlessness every letter that he had written. He made self-gratulation and smug complacency forever aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise.

III

Bruno Bauer found the *Epistle to the Philippians* characterized by "a monotonous repetition of what had already been said, by a want of any deep and masterly connection of ideas, and by a certain poverty of thought." This is a kind of criticism of which we are to hear far less in the future. Strange that it has masqueraded so long as scholarly and illuminating. Are 'good-bye letters to be weighed in the same scales with arguments and orations? Was Paul nothing but a controversialist? After rearing the pillars of the vast structure that we call Christian thought, could he not sit for a moment within its walls and review the

work of his hand? Had he no personality? Is not his survey of what he had tried to be and do of priceless value in appraising the man that stood behind the disputant?

Let us put over against Bauer's inane comment a recent cablegram from Paris: "One gratefully appreciated service done by the workers of the Y. M. C. A. in France is to bring relatives to the bedsides of dying or fatally wounded soldiers." Paul was not dying, nor was he fatally wounded. But he was in the shadow of death and he knew it. This letter and this letter alone is the passport to his presence.

IX

REVELATION

I

NO book of the Bible seems to me to possess as much unreleased power as the book of *Revelation*. Written at a time when the struggling churches were ringed around with enemies, when the Roman Empire had leagued itself against them, when the future seemed impenetrably dark, this book sounds a note of confidence so resonant and dauntless that the victory seemed already half won. It is more than a piece of writing; it belongs rather to the realm of deed. It is not so much a trumpet calling to battle for right as a sword unsheathed till right be won. Handicapped though it has been by perverse interpretation it has done more than any other one book to halt the old idea that the Golden Age is behind us. When this book was written all the great world literatures had represented history as only a steep descent from good through bad to worst. From

Hesiod to Virgil there is hardly a Greek or Roman poet who does not look longingly back to the remote age of painlessness and peace; there is hardly one who does not bewail his own fate in being born into the Iron Age of unrequited labor and unattainable hope. There was no forward view. Virgil tried for a moment to check the despair of his age by proclaiming a second Golden Age. But by the time the *Æneid* was written he too had succumbed to the national depression and instead of another Golden Age he can only hope for a reign of comparative peace.

As long as the sun is in front of us the shadows fall behind, but when the sun is behind us the shadows loom before. It is in the light of this truth that we must try to evaluate the service of *Revelation*. It placed a new heaven and a new earth far in front, as something yet to be; it substituted prospect for retrospect; it sent out a call to the spiritual forces of the world to mobilize for a vast constructive and reconstructive effort; it lifted men's minds to a vision of

That God, which ever lives and loves,
 One God, one law, one element,
 And one far-off divine event,
 To which the whole creation moves.

But there is still unreleased power in the book; it is still functioning below its maximum, because it has fallen upon a time when men eddy around its minor obscurities instead of moving with its great marching current. Did you never make the height bear the burden of the plane? Did you never call upon the future to lift you over the present? "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." The Christian's hereafter has ever been physician to his now.

Yesterday and to-day

Have been heavy with labor and sorrow,
I should faint if I did not see

The day that is after to-morrow.

Lieutenant Coningsby Dawson writes from the horror of the trenches to his father, the author of these lines, and adds: "There's that last verse of your poem which prophesied utterly the spirit in which we men at the Front are fighting to-day." That last verse is:

And for me, with spirit elate

The mire and the fog I press through,
For Heaven shines under the cloud
Of the day that is after to-morrow.

That is a glimpse of the height at which

Revelation moves; it is a wafture from the airs that one must breathe who essays to traverse these uplands of St. John. *Revelation* is the Christian epic of "the day that is after to-morrow." In its pages one may hear voices that will sound forever in his ears and see far-moving lights that will play forever about his feet as he presses painfully, it may be, but confidently upward.

The commentators, however, view the book otherwise. Its swift-flowing central current has been so stayed and deflected by them as to be hardly discernible in their pages. Like the book of *Jonah*, the book of *Revelation* has suffered much from piecemeal interpretation. Take the words "a thousand years" which occur in the first part of the twentieth chapter. If the reader has felt even for a moment the tense elevation of mood at which these words were written he will not be tempted to construe them as meaning exactly ten hundred. When the author of *Daniel*, lifted to an equal elevation, cried out: "Ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him" (7:10), no one feels inclined to stop and calculate the exact product indicated. When Peter asked Christ whether he should forgive an offending brother seven times, the reply was: "I say

not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven" (*Matthew* 18:22). But does any one contend that the Master meant just four hundred and ninety? In the book of *Revelation*, however, the "thousand years" has divided critics into warring camps; it has thrust into our language such strange words as "chiliasm" and "chiliast," "premillennialist" and "postmillennialism," not one of which has a right to be alive. And, worse still, the disproportionate amount of thought and space given to the phrase leaves none for the larger dynamic message that the book proclaims.

Now whatever else you bring to the wonderful book that so fitly closes the canon of Scripture—and none other could close it—do not bring this kind of servile literalism. It will seal every passage for you as with the Apostle's own seven seals. Bring every ounce of vision, of pictorial faculty, of interpretative and constructive imagination that you possess. The result will be a permanent addition to faith and hope as well as to that exaltation of spirit in which both faith and hope find their coronation.

II

Revelation shows peculiar care in its struc-

tural divisions. Let us call these the Church Hesitant (chapters 1-3), the Church Militant (chapters 4-20), and the Church Triumphant (chapters 21-22). The seven churches addressed in the first division—Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea—stand of course for all of the churches then founded that had Christ “in the midst” (1:13). The number seven gave the Hebrew writer an instrument of peculiar power. It enabled him to symbolize not only completeness in number but completeness in excellence. It means here not only all the churches that had Christ in them but also the best in each. Its connotation was quantitative and qualitative, extensive and intensive. The churches, however, are not merely forewarned that a long period of struggle is before them. These first three chapters, in fact, contain but little warning and but little formal announcement. They constitute a commission. A new era in world history is dawning, an era unlike any that has gone before. The church is beginning its organized career. Hitherto its efforts have been scattered and unrelated. Now they are to be massed and integrated. Like seven golden candlesticks, the seven

churches point upward and burn as with one light. Above all, Christ is "in the midst." But the opposition is organized also and on a far vaster scale than the churches. No wonder there was hesitation and even blank dismay.

But the churches are not to be spectators; they are not to be merely one of the contestants for right. They are the only contestants for right. They constitute all of one side in the conflict. The destiny of the world is with them because with Christ "in the midst" they are the sole commissioned defenders of the things that Christ's presence confers. We speak of history as the conflict of individualism and institutionalism, of democracy and autocracy, of idealism and materialism; and the saying is true, in a way. But, according to St. John, there is a more elemental dualism than any of these. See deep enough and you will see right on one side and wrong on the other.

Lowell sums it up:

History's pages but record
One death-grapple in the darkness 'twixt old
systems and the Word;
Truth forever on the scaffold, Wrong forever
on the throne,—

Yet that scaffold sways the future, and behind
the dim unknown,
Standeth God within the shadow, keeping
watch above His own.

"History is philosophy teaching by examples," said Bolingbroke. "Not so," says St. John; "history is now going to be Christ in the church subduing the world unto himself." The churches are to constitute the sole partnership of right. They are to make history by protecting it from the forces that would unmake it. There is a striking analogy between St. John's thought and that of President Wilson in his Manchester speech of December 30, 1918: "It is a fine correlation of the influence of duty and right," he said, "that right is the equipoise and balance of society. And so, when we analyze the present situation and the future that we now have to mold and control, it seems to me that there is no other thought than that that can guide us." Both, you will notice, stood at the parting of the ways; both were seeking what was permanent and constructive; and both found in right the sole clue to the maze that encompassed them.

To regard this portion of *Revelation* as a mere announcement to interested spectators

is to miss the challenge of the whole book. It is the church that is to do the fighting. It is the fighting itself that is to constitute the second and longest division of the book. It is the ultimate victory issuing in a new and redeemed world that is to form the culminating vision with which the Bible ends. The noise of battle can be already heard in the solemn promises that are made to each church. To the church in Ephesus: "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God" (2:7); to the church in Smyrna: "He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death" (2:11); to the church in Pergamos: "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it" (2:17); to the church in Thyatira: "And he that overcometh, and keepeth my words unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations" (2:26); to the church in Sardis: "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels" (3:5); to

the church in Philadelphia: "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name" (3:12); and to the church in Laodicea: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne" (3:22).

III

"After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter" (4:1). Thus begins the vision of the Church Militant. The battle is on now, and though we see through a glass darkly, we at least see. Do we not feel, too, and feel all the more vividly because of the semi-darkness that is about us? The Apostle is sketching in broad and dramatic outline the interim between his time and that yet remote period when there

shall emerge the new heaven and the new earth,—

There where law, life, joy, impulse are one thing.

The very predominance of the number seven seems evidence to me that the seer is not attempting to chronicle in advance any definite historical facts in history, like the rise of the Catholic Church, the invasion of the Turks, the havoc of the French Revolution, and what not. He is dealing with types of events under which definite events may be grouped, it is true, but as illustrations rather than as foreseen fulfillments; he is dealing with masses of fact fused by vision into essential unity; his eye is not on the fact or event in itself but on the genus that includes it; he is building compartments into which facts, events, causes, and processes may be fitted as the centuries pass.

There are five of these major compartments waiting to be occupied and illustrated by the unfolding of time. Each compartment may hold innumerable events, and one great event or process may radiate its effects into each compartment. (1) The seven seals (5:1-8:1) typify the revelation

of vast secrets that the future holds in store; (2) the seven trumpets (8:2-11:19) herald the announcement of world changes; (3) the seven living things (12:1-13:18) are types of character that on a titanic scale will prove formative for good or evil; (4) the seven vials of wrath (15:1-16:21) are plagues that cause the extinction or modification of races and nations; (5) the seven dooms (17:1-20:15) are judgments of God culminating in the final overthrow of evil. These five factors do not correspond, it is true, to the categories that modern historians employ. Why should they? St. John was not writing history. He was glimpsing it. He was prefiguring its essential processes. If his method is not that of a Macaulay or Stubbs it is strikingly like that of a Carlyle or Hugo.

It is still more like that of the poets. Here is Tennyson's Apocalypse. He longs—

To sleep through terms of mighty wars,
And wake on science grown to more,
On secrets of the brain, the stars,
As wild as aught of fairy lore;
And all that else the years will show,
The Poet-forms of stronger hours,
The vast Republics that may grow,
The Federations and the Powers;

Titanic forces taking birth
In divers seasons, divers climes;
For we are ancients of the earth,
And in the morning of the times.

According to Tennyson the future is to witness (1) wars, (2) a crescent science, (3) new discoveries in psychology and astronomy, (4) nobler forms of poetry, and (5) a vast extension of democracy. These are the five main compartments which, the laureate thought, the coming ages would fill,—had indeed already begun to fill before he died. If you could congratulate Tennyson on his successful prophecy of the World War and on his provision for its effects in compartments 1 and 2 and 5, I think that his reply would be: "I did not prophesy the World War: I only built the compartments in which you may house its multiform results." And a similar answer would be made, I believe, by St. John, if you could question him about any of the epochal events that he is currently thought to have foreseen and foretold even in minute detail.

Instead, then, of the "futurist" or the "preterist" view of *Revelation* let us try the type or compartment view. It alone, I believe, will save *Revelation* to us as a great for-

ward-looking and forward-propelling vision. If John was describing in advance any of the great events that we call history, why, when you have established the identification to your satisfaction, that part of the book becomes for you extinct. You may blow out the light, for it can serve you no longer; retrospect takes the place of prospect, but retrospect has neither the urge nor the pulse of prospect. On the other hand, if John was describing only past or contemporary events, he would be getting no nearer to his goal at the end. The new heaven and the new earth that close his vision would have no avenues leading to them. The mighty conflicts of the Church Militant would be what Carlyle somewhere calls "all action and no go." Do not the trumpet words placed at the very beginning of this section, "I will shew thee things which must be hereafter," preclude the preterist view?

And these things will always be "hereafter." John's symbols face future-ward, not backward. Events pass through them in the march from future to past, but the symbols are not thereby exhausted. Mirrors are not worn out by reflecting passing pageants. Formulas do not age by use;

they vindicate afresh their vitality and their service whenever the elements combine in right proportions; they, too, face forward, ever forward. What was vision to John should be vision to us. Make of his vision a puzzle of the past and what was meant to be a rising sun, rising till it blend with the perfect day, becomes a setting sun, heralding a deeper darkness.

"It is this sense of the coming day," says Dr. Jowett, "which gives the soul power to endure. It is this sense of the future which we so much need. Our life is bigger than the passing hour. We must relate to-day to to-morrow. The sharp, destructive sweeps of the plowshare, shearing to the roots of ten thousand flowers, must be related to the coming golden grain. We must link the bare overturned clods with the harvest home! 'We are saved by hope.' Brave, consecrated men and women, devoting their strength to holy causes, are not moving in blind and futile circles; they are moving on God's road to ever-brightening issues. 'The path of the just is as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.' It is our wisdom to live and move and have our being in the power of that glorious expectation."

The comfort that this book brings and has brought in increasing measure during the heavy years that are just passed is due to the completeness of the vision that it unfolds. All other visions seem but rivulets beside it. Beginning with the church as it was in John's day, passing in quick review the kinds of spiritual struggle that must be expected, it ends with a victory so vividly foreseen and so satisfyingly phrased that the reader gains a new view of the meaning of history and a new confidence in the unconquerableness of Christianity. However vague or indeterminate the processes are that lie between the Church Hesitant and the Church Triumphant, God is in them and over them. They are struggles between essential right and essential wrong and Christ is in the midst of His Church. No one can read this battle of the symbols without feeling the onrush of mighty forces controlled to good and made convergent upon one sure goal. The imagery may not be Western, it may not be modern; but it is universal in its revelation of God over all and victory at the end. There is no mistaking it, unless one hold in leash every prompting of devotion, every beckoning of his spiritual imagination, and bring to

bear only his analytical and puzzle-solving faculties.

IV

Not the trumpets but the flutes play here, for the Church Triumphant emerges in stillness, in peace, in joy as uncompassable in words as it is unfathomable in depth. As the aged Apostle pens the last verses of the Bible, his thought turns back to the first verse: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Now he writes: "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away" (21:1). But the sea still writhes around him on Patmos Isle and the sea is the symbol of death, of suffering, of diverse languages, of nations antagonized by its dividing waves. The sea is not now water to St. John; it is waste and discord: "And there was no more sea" (21:1). The age-long contests of Athens, Rome, and Jerusalem are forever past but it was Jerusalem that embodied the immortal life: "And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and they shall be his people,

and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (21:2-4). But the temple,—has it not been rebuilt and restored? "And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it" (21:22).

Can the author of the Fourth Gospel remain long at this altitude without having recourse to light and life, those great words whose spiritual service he has almost pre-empted? "And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof" (21:23). This is the profoundest word on light that the Bible contains; having served its ministry it is regathered into the orbéd splendor of which it was but a pilgrim ray.

But life remains, life quickened, life intensified, life glorified; and with the flow of the river of life, bordered by the tree of life, the Apostle nears the close of his vision: "And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the

midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: and they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candles, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign forever and ever" (22: 1-5).

With the passing of the sun, *Genesis* seems again to recur. Its central truths were creation and probation. But creation has been recreated. Has probation also run its appointed course? "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still" (22: 11). One can almost hear the words, "Depart from me," words as irrevocable as doom, words that in themselves are doom. But no, there is time yet. The doors are not closed. They are thrown wide open and the vision ends not with "Go" but with "Come":

"And the spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (22:17). On this note the Bible closes, closes with a promise and a prayer by John himself: "He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen."

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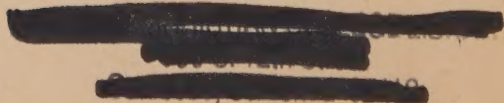
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